

# MY CHILDHOOD WITH GANDHIJI

BY  
**PRABHUDAS GANDHI**




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The ascetic in repose

# MY CHILDHOOD WITH GANDHIJI

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PRABHUDAS GANDHI

Foreword by  
H. S. L. POLAK



NAVAJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE  
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## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

*My Childhood with Gandhiji* is an abridged English edition of the author's voluminous Gujarati work જોડનનું પરોઢ which the Navajivan Trust had published as long ago as 1948. It was for the purpose of issuing it in a serial form that *The Hindustan Times* of Delhi had arranged for its abridgement and translation into English, some four years ago, through one of their editors Shri Dwarkanath Kalhan. In this work he was assisted by his wife Shri Promilla Kalhan. Our thanks are due to both Mr and Mrs Kalhan for all the labour they have put in to accomplish this task and to *The Hindustan Times* for their kind offer of a ready MSS.

As the title suggests, the book is a record of the author's memoirs of his childhood days with his grand uncle Gandhiji in South Africa. And they are so closely and finely interwoven that they read like a long and interesting story which cannot but fascinate the reader. But more than that these reminiscences have an importance of their own. Shri Prabhudas is a perceptive observer ; all his life he has been an eye-witness to several of Gandhiji's activities ; he is an admirer of his personality and a keen student and follower of his philosophy. All these factors together with his literary capacity rendered his candid account into a revealing biography of the man Gandhi who launching upon his career as an English-trained lawyer soon became the champion of the Indian Community in South Africa and later on one of the most outstanding figures of all generations. These memoirs disclose how Gandhiji tried to cultivate various spiritual qualities, how he did his utmost to discipline himself and all those around him first in his pioneer laboratory — the Phoenix Settlement and later at the Tolstoy Farm. In these two Ashramas Gandhiji carried on his experiments of truth,

non-violence, labour, self-help etc. which ultimately became the "mainsprings of his latter ideas and actions". It is here that he first tried to evolve his educational theory through his experiments at the Cordes' and the Tolstoy Farm schools. In these pages we have also a glimpse of his early nature cure and dietetic experiments. He has also dealt at length with the various phases of the Indians' Satyagraha Struggle in that continent as also the horrible conditions of jails and the pathetic lot of the Indians due to racial and discriminatory policy of the South African Government which still continues and which seems to have been even more rigidly enforced in the form of Group Areas Bill and a host of others following in its wake. This book, therefore, is as much a history of the South African Satyagraha as a biography of most inspiring life of service and sacrifice. In spite of the author's great admiration for Gandhiji it is singularly free from eulogy and over-statements.

This book is a valuable supplement to Gandhiji's two well-known books, *The Satyagraha in South Africa* and *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* and will command the attention of the lay as well as the serious and thoughtful students of Gandhiji's life and philosophy.

Ahmedabad,

21-12-'56



## INTRODUCTION

Gandhiji's great figure was before me from my earliest childhood. When I was a little boy he was a constant source of amazement to me. As I grew up I began to find pleasure in recounting memories of my life with him.

After I had completed this book, a friend once laughingly remarked that I had taken more than twice the time in writing about the period of years I had spent at Phoenix. This was actually so. I was in the Phoenix Settlement for about eight years. The writing of the book from the time I started on it took me nearly 18 years. I did not, of course, work on the book continuously. I wrote a chapter from time to time. I do not think I ever wrote more than one chapter a month. Sometimes there were gaps of years. I revised the book several times and many chapters were rewritten. My interest in the work had continued to grow. I replied to that friend that it was a good thing that I had done the work slowly and with increasing comprehension.

This is how it all began. When Gandhiji started his movement against the Rowlatt Act and was imprisoned in Yeravda Jail in 1922, a grim atmosphere was created in the Sabarmati Ashram. Believing in the principle that, like charity, even a political campaign must begin at home, he had asked the students of the Satyagraha Ashram to suspend their studies and throw themselves into the struggle for freedom. We spent most of our time in Khadi and Harijan work. The students of the Ashram's National School, on the advice of their Principal, Kaka Kalelkar, brought out a hand-written bi-monthly journal in order to keep up practice in reading and writing. It was called *Madhpudo* (beehive). I was its editor. Even though it was a students' magazine, teachers contributed most of the articles. One of the series of articles, हिमालयनो प्रवास (Travels in the Himalayas) by Kaka Kalelkar, was later published

in book form and its Gujarati edition \* is now a university text-book.

Since we were in the thick of the non-co-operation movement we had been deprived of our school education in the Ashram. After a few months no teachers were left with us. Some were jailed, others were claimed by the Gujarat Vidyapith, Bardoli and the *Navajivan*. I had to run about for every single article for *Madhpudo*. Even then I found it difficult to fill its pages. Charkha, being our main duty, took most of our time; and it was not easy to be able to study to produce an article.

*Madhpudo* had built up a reputation because of articles contributed by our teachers. I was anxious to keep it up even in their absence. As editor I had to face the main responsibility. Other students would not share the burden with me. I was thus forced into a position of having to fill the pages of the magazine myself.

I did not dare write moralizing sermons. My knowledge of history, science, literature or other subjects was not adequate enough to enable me to write on any one of them. I knew that poems and stories were popular with readers. But I was innocent of prosody and could think of nothing which could be turned into a story. Racking my brain I thought of writing about the Phoenix Ashram.

I had already realized that people enjoyed hearing even the smallest details about Gandhiji's life. They would listen with rapt attention to my account of the life at Phoenix. To them it was like following a romantic tale to know how the Ashram was founded, what kind of people were around Gandhiji, what he did, how he taught us, how hard he worked in the fields and elsewhere, how he tolerated the antics of the boys, how he handled mischievous children, how he provided opportunities for our pleasure and amusement during short journeys and how he trained us for hard life, even jail life. Knowing people's keen interest in these details, I began to write about them.

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\* हिमालयनो प्रवास, Price Re. 1-8; also in Hindi, हिमालयकी यात्रा, price Rs. 2; both by Navajivan.



Gandhiji's history of *Satyagraha in South Africa* had not yet been published. His *Autobiography* had not even been written. My patchy and incomplete account was, therefore, read with interest. Copies of *Madhpudo* went from hand to hand and never came back to me. I was naturally encouraged and began to write almost in the manner of a historian. Soon a brief 'History of Phoenix' was ready. Later, when the *Kumar*, an illustrated magazine in Gujarati, began to appear from Ahmedabad, I was persuaded to reshape the articles for it by its editor, my friend, Shri Bachubhai Ravat. The series appeared in the *Kumar* for years. I went through the articles all over again and filled in some gaps when preparing them for publication in book form.

At the time of this eventful story I was a small boy. I still do not feel very old at 50, though childhood has long since passed, leaving behind its pleasant memories. I hope I am able to write about the days of my childhood with detachment and impartiality.

This is not my autobiography. I am not competent to write one. But the whole account seems to centre round me. No other method was possible. The child between four and twelve sees the world only through its own eyes. It has to judge the greatest saints or the greatest rulers from its own standards and observes them in its own way. I had at that time no sense of history. I was not even aware that the atmosphere I was growing up in was in any way unusual. How could I have imagined that uncle Mohandas who let me ride on his back would one day be recognized as one of the greatest men the world has known?

Even if I wanted to, I would not be able to present this account written from memory as the life story of Magan Kaka or Bapuji. Nor can I present it even as the history of Phoenix Ashram or that of the Satyagraha movement in South Africa. I might have been able to present it as a history of Gandhiji's educational experiments in South Africa. But I feel the best course for me is to present this account merely as reminiscences of my childhood.

PRABHUDAS GANDHI



## FOREWORD

It is with the greatest interest and pleasure that I have read this very valuable book, which deals with the events leading up to and during a period when I was intimately associated with Gandhiji, his weekly paper, the *Indian Opinion*, and the South African Indian Satyagraha.

The author was known to me in those days at Phoenix as the very young son of one of my two closest Indian colleagues in connection with the publication of the paper — his revered father, Chhaganlal Gandhi, and his beloved uncle, Maganlal Gandhi.

I am really amazed at the remarkably accurate memory of those distant and historic days that he has displayed in what is probably the most personal account of them that has yet appeared in print.

I very much hope that this book, so sincerely and objectively written, will have wide publicity, for it helps to record the creative period in Gandhiji's life which ultimately led to his major task of building up the great movement towards and the ultimate achievement of Indian independence in the spirit of Ahimsa.

New Delhi,

3-12-'56

H. S. L. POLAK





## GLOSSARY

- Arya Samaj* — a Hindu reformist organization founded by Dayananda Saraswati
- Ashram* — place for spiritual retirement ; colony of workers run on spiritual basis ; here, Gandhiji's colony of workers
- Balaram* — elder brother of Lord Krishna
- Bapu, Bapuji* — literally father, a term of affection used for Gandhiji
- Bharat* — younger brother of Rama, the hero of the *Ramayana*. He is adored for his great devotion to Rama
- Brahmacharya* — observance of celibacy or continence in the quest of Brahma, *i.e.* God
- Brahmin* — member of the first (priestly) caste among Hindus
- Buddhist* — one who believes in Buddhism
- Chapati* — thin flat cake made of flour
- Chutney* — a paste of coconut kernel, chillies, tamarind, salt, etc.
- Daftari* — record keeper
- Dal* — pulse
- Devanagari* — name of the national script of India
- Dwarka* — place of pilgrimage in Saurashtra
- Dwarkanath* — Lord of Dwarka, *i.e.* Krishna
- Gadi* — throne ; seat of honour
- Ghee* — clarified butter
- Gita* — the Song Celestial ; a highly philosophical poem of 700 verses which occurs in the *Mahabharata* in which Krishna discourses on eternal verities
- Gujarat Vidyapith* — national university founded by Mahatma Gandhi at Ahmedabad (Gujarat) in 1920
- Gurukul* — literally teacher's family ; ancient type of school in India where pupils lived with the teacher as members of his family ; school conducted by members of the Arya Samaj

*Hanumanji* — important character in the *Ramayana* ; depicted as monkey-chief of extraordinary physical strength

*Harijan* — literally child of God ; name coined by Gandhiji to describe the so-called untouchables

*Harishchandra* — an ancient Hindu king who sacrificed his all for the sake of truth

*Jain* — follower of Jainism, an ancient religion of India ; one of its cardinal doctrines is Ahimsa or non-violence

*Kaka* — uncle

*Kirti Mandir* — temple erected in Porbandar to perpetuate Gandhiji's memory

*Krishna* — central figure of the epic *Mahabharata*, who is venerated by Hindus as God incarnate

*Lakshman* — another brother of Rama who accompanied him in exile

*Lungi* — loin-cloth worn round the waist

*Mahabharata* — Hindu epic of about 1,00,000 verses, the central theme of which is the great war between the Pandavas and their cousins the Kauravas

*Mantra* — pithy sacred text used for meditation

*Narsinh Mehta* — a poet-saint of Gujarat who lived in the 15th century

*Nawab* — title of a Muslim ruler

*Quran* — Holy book of Islam

*Rajachandra* — a jain saint and philosopher who had influenced Gandhiji's life immensely ; Gandhiji regarded him as the best Indian of his time

*Raja* — king

*Ramanama* — name of Rama, *i.e.* God

*Rani* — queen

*Sannyasi* — one who renounces worldly ties

*Satyagraha* — literally holding on to truth ; the truth-force or soul-force

*Satyagrahi* — one who practises Satyagraha

*Seth* — merchant, a wealthy man

*Sevagram* — name of the Ashram that Gandhiji founded near Wardha

*Shikari* — hunter

*Shiva* — a Hindu God

*Shudra* — member of the fourth or menial caste among Hindus

*Somnath* — ancient temple of God Shiva in Saurashtra

*Swami* — literally master, a spiritual preceptor

*Swaminarayana (sect)* — an offshoot of Vaishnavism

*Swami Sahajananda* — founder of the Swaminarayana sect

*Thakore* — landlord ; term applied to rulers of small principalities especially in Saurashtra

*Upanishads* — ancient philosophical treatises which are believed by Hindus to contain revealed truths

*Vaishnava* — a devotee of God Vishnu, the 'Preserver' among the Hindu trinity

*Vallabhacharya* — the celebrated founder of the Vaishnava sect

*Yuvaraj* — prince, heir apparent





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# MY CHILDHOOD WITH GANDHIJI



## CHAPTER I

### THE FAMILY HOUSE IN PORBANDAR

On return from South Africa in 1914 after the Satyagraha Movement there had ended, the teachers and students of the Phoenix Ashram were for some time guests of Swami Shraddhanandji's Gurukul in the Himalayas, on the bank of the Ganga near Haradvar. At one of the functions the students of the Gurukul sang a song in praise of Mother India "at whose feet roll the oceans". We fell in love with the song. After that until the Jalianwala Bagh massacre started a nation-wide agitation, whenever Gandhiji addressed a meeting he used to ask his youngest son Devadas and me to sing that song to open the proceedings. We sang it loudly and were always successful in creating quiet and order among the audience.

The song left a deep impression on me. It made India real to me, India at whose feet the oceans roll. I feel similarly about the peninsula of Saurashtra, my homeland, at whose feet, too, the ocean rolls.

#### **City of Porbandar**

Along the half-moon-shaped coastline of Saurashtra there are a number of ports. Porbandar, where Gandhiji was born, is among the biggest. It had trade with Iran, Arabia and Africa long before the advent of the British and the Portuguese. Today it is a growing town. It has a cement mill, a match factory and various other industrial enterprises. The new city is well laid out with wide roads flanked by tall buildings.

Porbandar is also known as Sudamapuri. It is 21.45 degrees north of the equator and 69.32 degrees east of Greenwich. About a hundred yards away from the coast,



against which the waters of the Arabian sea beat constantly, is a low embankment with a metalled road running over it. On this side of the road is the city. About a quarter of a mile from the coast stands a house bought in 1777 A.D. by Mahatma Gandhi's great grandfather, Shri Harjivan Gandhi.

The sale deed of the house is still there. Even though the hand-made paper on which it is written has been damaged in places by insects, the document is legible and the ink unfaded. It is written in Gujarati which is a little different from the Gujarati of today. The syntax and use of verbs are similar to those in modern Gujarati, but some of the words are old and the script is Devanagari.

### **Joint Family Life**

This house accommodated all the seven sons of Shri Uttamchand Gandhi and their families who, while running separate kitchens, enjoyed the benefits of a joint family life. Today the house would be considered exceedingly small and uncomfortable, but it must have been convenient enough in Shri Uttamchand Gandhi's days. I have heard my grandfather tell me that the house grew with the family. New storeys were added whenever found necessary.

In 1947 when Gandhiji was staying at Valmiki Mandir (Bhangi Colony) in Delhi and was busy preparing to bid farewell to the British, two young men of the Gandhi family from Porbandar went to see him. Negotiations were then going on to have the ancestral house vacated by one of the families living there to enable the Kirti Mandir to be built. When the house was mentioned to him, Gandhiji's mind went back to it and he said, "One can't forget that house. If you are on the third floor you have a lovely, cool sea breeze. But if you are on the ground floor you cannot stay there even for a few minutes; it is so warm and stuffy."

It was in one of the rooms in this warm and stuffy part of the house that Gandhiji was born, and his mother, Putliba, spent her life. The room is no more than

20 feet long, 13 feet wide and 11 feet high. Entering the room one finds a door on the right leading to another room. The inner room was used by Kaba Kaka's mother, Tulasima. It is 12 feet by  $12\frac{1}{2}$  feet and used to be quite dark. In the 13 feet space between the doors of the inner and outer rooms used to be the Gujarati style swing (*jhoola*) suspended from the ceiling. In the same room, on the left of the entrance, was a stand for water vessels, and next to it a row of clay pots containing food grains. Brass and bronze utensils were arranged above the grain pots. On the left of the stand for water vessels was a small kitchen,  $6\frac{1}{2}$  feet by  $5\frac{1}{2}$  feet, which had hardly room for two people.

Under the verandah floor outside the room where Gandhiji was born is a water storage tank. The house actually stands on three sides of the underground tank. The tank is 15 feet deep, 20 feet long and 10 feet wide. Drinking water is sometimes scarce in Porbandar since the town is on the sea. One can get well water, but it is brackish. Our ancestors used the tank system to collect rain water. The stone floor of the roof-top would be washed clean before the rains and a quantity of lime would be heaped near the mouth of the pipe connecting the roof with the tank. That is all that was required to keep the tank working all these 150 years or so. The water collected in the tank would be enough for the whole year. Even outsiders helped themselves regularly from the tank. To this day the water of the Gandhi tank is sweeter and purer than the water of Porbandar wells.

Gandhiji's marriage ceremony was performed in the little space in front of the verandah and it was from this house that the marriage party went through winding lanes to the house of Kasturba's parents not very far away.

The house is so solidly built that it can still last for hundreds of years.

### **The Kirti Mandir**

The Kirti Mandir built adjacent to the house by a Seth of Porbandar, Shri Nanjee Kalidas, now dominates



the whole scene. This building has a spacious courtyard with a marble floor. On 26 pillars on four sides of it are inscribed the sayings of Gandhiji. In the sanctum under the towering spire are life-size portraits of Gandhiji and Kasturba, and in the rooms on the two sides of it articles connected with constructive work are exhibited. It is the desire of those in charge of the Kirti Mandir to see that visitors get a fair idea of the social structure based on Gandhiji's ideals of truth and non-violence. They also hope to provide facilities for the study of Gandhiji's life and teachings.

Though the house of the first distinguished ancestor of our family, Shri Uttamchand Gandhi, was in Porbandar, our original ancestral home was in Kutiyana district. When I was 17, I once went to that locality with my grandparents and was struck by the beauty of the natural surroundings of the place. The river Bhadar, the biggest river in Saurashtra, flows on the border of Kutiyana. Around it are hills which have reverberated with the sounds of gallant cavalry hoofs for centuries. The sea, of course, is not far away and there is a desert area also in the vicinity. The place may be considered a miniature geographical Saurashtra.

### **Ancient Contacts**

Before the Rajkot-Jamnagar railway was constructed, pilgrims to and from Dwarka used to pass through Porbandar. But that is not the only contact that Porbandar or the whole of Saurashtra has had with the rest of India. That contact, in fact, has been continuous ever since Krishna and his brother Balaram moved with their followers from Mathura in the heart of India to Dwarka during the times of the *Mahabharata*. After that Saurashtra had close links with Rajasthan, Malwa and other places in the north, with Maharashtra and Karnataka in the south and, through the sea route, with Sind in the west.

Saurashtra has been influenced by all religious and cultural movements in the country. Besides the saints whom the region itself gave birth to, it came under the

influence of the Brahman worshippers of Shiva at Somnath, Buddhist preachers and Jain sages who taught the principle of non-violence, the Vaishnava teacher Vallabhacharya from Kerala and the Swaminarayana teacher Swami Sahajanand from U.P. The great devotional poet Narsinh Mehta of Junagadh taught that the people should love the 'untouchables' and the songs of Mirabai led them towards devotion. Among others who brought awakening to the land was Swami Dayanand Saraswati, himself a son of Saurashtra.

The language of Saurashtra is Gujarati. Before Gandhiji started his weekly *Navajivan* and established the Gujarat Vidyapith in Ahmedabad the Saurashtrian and Gujarati styles were developing somewhat differently. Under Gandhiji's influence, the two styles began to grow as one. His attempts at Ahmedabad and at Godhra Literary Conference, where he spoke in Gujarati made people speak and think in Gujarati. It was also because of Gandhiji that the tendency towards an excessive use of Sanskrit words on the one hand and Persian words and phrases on the other was checked. He made it a people's language instead of letting it grow into a scholar's tongue. The Gujarati of today is as different from the Gujarati of three hundred years ago as modern Hindi is from Braj *bhasha*. Actually in the old days Braj *bhasha* was the language favoured by Gujarati poets. It was only about a hundred and fifty years ago that the great poet Bhat Premanand began to write his poems in Gujarati, and thus gave birth to modern Gujarati literature.



## CHAPTER II

### AN ANCESTOR WHO RISKED HIS LIFE FOR TRUTH

From whatever facts I have been able to gather Lalji Gandhi's name is the first that one comes across in our family history. In the fifth generation of Lalji Gandhi's family was born Uttamchand Gandhi who brought honour and fame to the Gandhi name. Mahatma Gandhi was born in the seventh generation.

Lalji Gandhi's son, Ramji Gandhi, was a *daftari* and so a right-hand man of the Diwan in Porbandar State. A *daftari* had the same responsibilities then as a home minister has in a cabinet today.

#### **Family Property**

It is said that Ramji Gandhi's son, Rahidas Gandhi, was also a *daftari* in Porbandar. Rahidas received a little land in Junagadh by way of gift from the Nawab of Junagadh. Even today this piece of land belongs to the Gandhi family. The family houses in Kutiyana and Porbandar have been sold, property has been divided among the brothers, but the entire family still owns this piece of land. The income from it is used for the upkeep of the temple of the family deity. The land, which is hardly two acres, is the only ancestral property of the Gandhi family that remains.

Rahidas Gandhi had two sons, Harjivan and Daman. Uttamchand was Harjivan Gandhi's son. Harjivan Gandhi was also a *daftari* in Porbandar and later his younger brother, Daman Gandhi, succeeded him in that position.

Where and what education Uttamchand Gandhi, who was Gandhiji's grandfather, received is not known. That a tradesman's sons should learn to write a letter and be proficient at arithmetic and accounts was considered sufficient education in those days.

#### **Customs Contractor**

After completing his early education, when Uttamchand had to think of finding a profession, he planned for himself



a future different from that of his father and his uncle. He was perhaps not interested in trade in which his father was engaged. His uncle, Daman Gandhi, was not able to find him any suitable position. Possibly, Daman Gandhi did not consider it proper to make such a request to the ruler. That is why he found an independent job for young Uttamchand. The job was that of a customs contractor at the port of Porbandar.

The place where customs duties were collected was called Mithi Mandvi. Even at that time the sea trade of Porbandar was fairly extensive. Because there was no railway at the time pilgrims to Dwarka and Somnath used the sea route. It was not easy to deal with the problem of collecting the customs duty from travellers and traders. They had to be treated with consideration. At the same time the man-in-charge had to see that the State did not lose any revenue. When Uttamchand took on the responsibility he, it appears, was hardly out of his teens, but he did the work with great competence. Meanwhile, he did not neglect his future. In order to improve his prospects he spent his spare time in Daman Gandhi's office taking regular training. Soon he picked up enough to be a help to Daman Gandhi, who was now enabled to find some rest and to leave some of his work to young Uttamchand.

Uttamchand was a popular figure. To the elders of the town and at court he was Ota or Ota Gandhi and to others Ota Bapa. He was the first in the Gandhi family to be appointed to the post of Diwan, having won it through his own hard work.

### **Ruler Impressed**

One day Rana Khimaji, ruler of Porbandar, sent for Daman Gandhi to deal with an important problem. When the messenger arrived, Ota Gandhi was alone in his uncle's office. Instead of being flustered and running to look for Daman Gandhi, Ota Gandhi himself went to the Rana and told him that he was at his service since his uncle was away. The Rana was impressed by his confident manner and entrusted the youth with work which normally would have been the responsibility of an experienced official. Ota

Bapa handled the job very well and thus won the Rana's confidence.

The very next day Ota Bapa was called by the Rana and asked if he was prepared to undertake a difficult job of work. Ota Bapa's ready reply was that there was little that could not be done with the Rana's blessings. The Rana explained that the contractor appointed to collect customs duty at the port of Madhavpur had not been paying the revenue. He was defying the court as he thought the ruler's government was weak. This contractor had to be handled. Ota Bapa readily agreed to go to Madhavpur.

This was the time when the British had just started their inroads into Saurashtra ; it had not yet been brought under centralized control. More powerful States like Junagadh and Jamnagar were swallowing the territory of their weaker neighbours. The Porbandar ruler's jurisdiction was limited only to a few villages. The State's territory in various places had been occupied by Junagadh. The Porbandar ruler could only collect land revenue in a few places.

### **Loss of Revenue**

Madhavpur, which belonged to Porbandar, had considerable trade. But it was with difficulty that the Porbandar ruler had maintained his right to collect customs duty there. With the backing of Junagadh the contractor had begun to default in crediting revenue due to Porbandar.

On arriving in Madhavpur Ota Gandhi, instead of trying to deal with the contractor, decided that the problem should be tackled at its root. He made a survey of the Porbandar territory within the borders of Junagadh and started negotiations with Junagadh's representatives. He offered to hand over islands of Porbandar territory, including the right to collect land revenue there, if Junagadh agreed not to claim any rights in the coastal areas from Madhavpur to Porbandar. His proposal was accepted and Junagadh signed an agreement ceding all rights in the coastal areas to Porbandar.



The area at the time was a sandy waste, but Ota Bapa had the foresight to realize that it could be greatly developed. Commenting on the settlement with Junagadh he wrote that if a dam could be built on the Bhadar river, the whole area could be transformed into a fertile tract which would bring rich returns.

### **Waste Transformed**

Ota Bapa's prophecy later came true. Once when I was on a walking trip in this area old cultivators told me that since the construction of the Bhadar dam the value of agricultural produce had increased from less than Rs. 100 to over Rs. 75,000 a year. This was during the slump period after World War I ; the value of the produce must be much greater now.

It was because of the treaty of Madhavpur negotiated by Ota Bapa that the tiny State of Porbandar with an area of no more than 3,600 square miles was included among Class I States when the British classified the States of Saurashtra into different categories. The treaty gave the State a contiguous territory with full rights over it and increased its income from a few thousand rupees to several lakhs a year.

### **Finances Improved**

The success of Ota Bapa's mission to Madhavpur was rewarded by his immediate appointment to the position of Diwan of Porbandar which he continued to hold till he was well advanced into old age. His term as Diwan brought great prestige to the State of Porbandar and was an example to be followed by his descendants.

Just as Porbandar had lost control over its territory, similarly its financial condition was far from satisfactory. A Cutch trader's concern known as Sundarji's firm had been lending money to the rulers of Porbandar. Gradually the loan reached such proportions that the entire State was mortgaged to the firm which for years took away all the State's income, leaving only enough for essential expenditure.

When Ota Bapa became Diwan of the State and found its affairs in such disorder he made a thorough study of all

the papers concerning the firm's loan. In the mortgage deed he found a helpful clause. At the end of the document was a provision that the creditor firm could claim the income only from main sources, namely, land revenue and customs duties. He interpreted it to mean that income from other sources like stamp duty and duty on sale of land and property, etc., could not be claimed by the creditor firm. Income from these sources, from then on, flowed into the State treasury and slowly the loan to the firm was repaid. The State was thus saved from insolvency by Ota Bapa.

### **Rani's Rage**

The story is well known. Gandhiji has also touched on it in the first chapter in his *Autobiography* \*. This is how it came about. The State's treasurer, an official named Khima Kothari, who was also in charge of stores, was a strict and dutiful man. He would not supply anything to anybody without proper instructions. The Rani's maid-servants were not happy with him. Since they could not get what they demanded, they filled the Rani's ears against him. One day they made such a serious charge against Kothari that the Rani lost her temper. She ordered Kothari to be arrested and brought before her.

Having heard of the Rani's anger, Kothari sought Ota Bapa's protection and demanded justice. Ota Bapa promised to protect him. On hearing this the Rani sent for Ota Bapa and asked him to produce Kothari before her. Ota Bapa refused to hand him over. He suggested that a proper inquiry should be made and if Kothari was at fault he should be tried.

The Rani was in rage. Justice, she said, was whatever she decided. She would punish the man and he must be handed over to her.

Ota Bapa tried to reason with her, but the Rani was in no mood to listen to him. On the other hand she threatened Ota Bapa with violence if he did not hand over

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\* Pub. Navajivan, Price Rs. 5.



Kothari. Ota Bapa was not to be intimidated. He stuck to his ground while the Rani sent him threatening messages. After some days the Rani sent a contingent of the army to his house with orders to bring away Kothari forcibly.

Ota Bapa's house was built of stone and its entrance door was solid and strong. When the soldiers could find no means of entering the house, the Rani decided to demolish the outer walls of the house and sent a cannon for the purpose.

The Arab bodyguards at Ota Bapa's house bravely defended the house unto the last. In those days it was not always safe to be in the service of rulers, who were autocratic and acted on their whims. One's life was always in danger. Whoever accepted the post of Diwan would appoint somebody to protect him against the ruler's displeasure. The leader of Ota Bapa's bodyguards was an Arab named Ghulam Mohammad Makrani. He gave his life in trying to protect Ota Bapa. A memorial to him still exists in the Vaishnava temple adjoining Ota Bapa's house.

### **Calm During Crisis**

Leaving the job of guarding the house to the Arabs, Ota Bapa settled down calmly to wait for the worst. He was prepared to lay down his life on the altar of truth. He called five of his sons who were in the house, his wife and Kothari and spoke to them assuringly. "God," he said, "has given us this opportunity to lay down our lives for truth. Let us be calm and fearless and face death cheerfully."

While cannon balls were hitting the outer walls of the house, inside Ota Bapa was praying for strength to keep his resolve unshaken. Meanwhile the news of high-handedness on the Rani's part had reached the British Political Agent in Rajkot and his intervention stopped any further action.

After this incident Ota Bapa left Porbandar and returned to his house in Kutiyana in Junagadh State. Hearing of his arrival in the State, the Nawab of Junagadh invited Ota Bapa to his court. When Ota Bapa appeared

before the Nawab he saluted him with his left hand. The whole court was scandalized. The Nawab was surprised to find such an experienced man behaving in such a manner. He questioned Ota Bapa.

“The right hand,” Ota Bapa explained, “is already pledged to Porbandar. I cannot forget that I am a servant of Porbandar and cannot therefore be disloyal to that State. Only my left hand is ready for your service. But I am not looking for a post. I wish to lead a quiet life in retirement.”

### **Penalty and Reward**

The Nawab's courtiers would have liked him to be punished for his discourtesy, but the Nawab was a man of understanding. He appreciated Ota Bapa's attitude and praised his loyalty and steadfastness. In order to maintain the dignity of his court, however, he ordered a penalty, while at the same time offering him a big present. The punishment was that Ota Bapa should stand in the sun for about ten minutes with his shoes off ! The reward was an order exempting Ota Bapa and his successors from customs duty if they carried on trade in Kutiyana. Ota Bapa stood in the sun for a few minutes and then went back to Kutiyana.

He now lived a quiet life. He would go riding for a while every day and would spend the rest of the time in prayer and religious discussion. Ota Bapa's salary as Diwan of Porbandar was 2,000 *koris* (there were four *koris* to a rupee). In addition, food grains and vegetables, etc., were supplied from the State's stores. This was not a large salary, but even so on the occasion of the marriage of his two eldest sons, Vallabhji and Pitambarji, he invited a large party according to the custom of the time. The marriages were celebrated with due ceremony and the whole town was invited. The invitation, as was customary, was extended by pasting rice on the town's gates. Anybody who came was served a meal. Celebrations continued for seven days, the Rana himself taking a leading part in them.



Ota Bapa, being a popular Diwan, received a large number of presents. The amount was almost as large as he had himself spent on the wedding. Anyone would have taken the money as his own, but Ota Bapa, soon after the work connected with the marriage was over, took the whole amount to the Rana. He presented it to the ruler saying that it was his since it had come from his subjects. The Rana, greatly touched, ordered the money to be deposited in the State's treasury, but at the same time directed that the expenditure on the marriages should be disbursed from the State's treasury. "Your sons," he told Ota Bapa, "are my sons."

### Rana's Assurance

When the Rani's misrule in Porbandar ended and the new Rana Vikramajit came to the *gadi* well-wishers of the State tried to get Ota Bapa back as Diwan. But he was not willing to go back from his life of retirement. There was, however, one result of their efforts and the assurances given by Rana Khimaji. All the sons of Ota Bapa were provided with posts in the State. Ota Bapa had taken a written assurance from Rana Khimaji during that ruler's last days. In substance the document said, "Ota Gandhi has rendered valuable service to this State and has always been loyal to me and to the State. My successors should, therefore, take care to see that Ota Gandhi is not put to any kind of trouble. On the other hand, my successors should continue generously to provide Ota Gandhi's successors with service in the State."

During the Rani's regency this assurance was of no use. But Ota Bapa's family benefited when Rana Vikramajit came of age.

Ota Bapa had six sons. The fifth, Karamchand Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi's father, and the sixth, Tulasidas Gandhi, succeeded each other as Diwan of Porbandar. It was Karamchand Gandhi who inherited Ota Bapa's brilliance, brains, love of truth and courage.

### CHAPTER III

#### FATHER PREDICTED FOR SON

Gandhiji's father came to be known as Kaba when he was a child, Kaba being short for Karamchand. He was Kaba Kaka, Kaba Bhai or Kaba Bapa in his own family. The street where he lived in Rajkot is still known as the Kaba Gandhi Lane. To me he has always been Kaba Kaka because he was Kaba Kaka to my grandfather who told me the story of his life.

As was customary for children during those days, Kaba Kaka received only elementary education, and, after finishing it, he is said to have worked as the Porbandar Rana's personal accountant and letter-writer. The Rana was struck by the young man's ability and when the occasion came he appointed him as his Diwan.

According to my grandfather, Kaba Kaka was made Diwan following Ota Bapa's refusal to return to Porbandar from Kutiyana where he had retired. He himself did not care to accept the post, but agreed to send his son Karamchand to take the Diwanship. He was about 25 then, and it must have been in the year 1847.

#### **Work in Rajkot**

Kaba Kaka was a successful and popular Diwan for 28 years. After that, in 1875, he was appointed to settle the boundary of the States of Saurashtra by the British Political Agent in Rajkot. He worked there for about two and a half years. His work was greatly appreciated, and, impressed by him, the Political Agent appointed him as Diwan of the tiny State of Rajkot which was facing financial difficulties. It was at that time proposed to make Rajkot the headquarters of the Saurashtra Agency, on the lines of the Ajmer Agency in Rajputana. A competent and experienced Diwan was needed to turn Rajkot into a stable State friendly to the British Power. Kaba Kaka put Rajkot affairs right in a couple of years and became well known as a successful Diwan all over Saurashtra.



### Years of Struggle

The 28 years he spent as Diwan in Porbandar were comparatively easy and he had a peaceful time there. But the 10 years he was in Rajkot were years of struggle. He was not happy either in his work or his own life, and his health, too, was not very good. This difficult period left a deep and lasting impression on his youngest son Mohandas.

In Porbandar Kaba Kaka enjoyed the reputation of being a just and truth-loving minister. The ruler never entertained appeals against his decisions. If anyone did approach him with an appeal, the Rana would send him back to Kaba Kaka assuring him of justice at the hands of his Diwan.

Kaba Kaka's popularity as a judge was also due to the patience and sympathy with which he listened to people who approached him. He lived a simple life. There was hardly any difference between him and the common people. That is why it was not difficult for him to understand and sympathize with the sufferings of the common people.

The period of Kaba Kaka's Diwanship of Porbandar was the period of the Gandhi family's affluence. At meal times about a score of people would sit down with him to eat. His household was a large one, including many relations, secretaries and servants. Those of his relations who came looking for work were found suitable jobs. He helped his relations materially as well as with advice on all occasions. His wife, Putliba, was the mother of the household. She looked after everybody, never lost her temper and was patient and good-natured. She herself worked very hard from early morning to midnight. She made do with simple food herself while looking after the needs of others. Kaba Kaka in spite of his position would help Putliba in her domestic work. My grandfather told me that Kaba Kaka would receive visitors every morning in Raghunathji's temple. There, while discussing state affairs he would continue peeling and cutting vegetables.

Perhaps Gandhiji's interest in dietetic experiments was at least in part a legacy from his father.

Similarly a kind of Ashram had also come into being during Kaba Kaka's time. He as head of the joint family looked after his relations. In Gandhiji's Ashram the place of blood ties was taken by common ideology and a common devotion to duty. Both Gandhiji and Kasturba looked after the inmates of the Ashram with a natural concern for their comfort. Having seen them looking after people they considered to be of their own family, I was never surprised to hear my grandfather tell me of the solicitude of Kaba Kaka and Putliba for the members of their large household.

The main difference between the temperaments of Kaba Kaka and his son Mohandas was that while Gandhiji was perhaps a revolutionary, his father never even thought of any change or departure from orthodox practice. That is, perhaps, why Kaba Kaka married thrice.

Gandhiji writes in his *Autobiography*: "Kaba Gandhi married four times in succession, having lost his wife each time by death." His last marriage took place when he was over 40. An elder of the family mentioning the subject said that in Kaba Kaka's days a widower was not allowed to remain in that state for long. For Kaba Kaka not to have married when he became a widower was almost impossible.

### Two Versions

It appears that Kaba Kaka's first marriage took place when he was 14 and the second at the age of 25 when he became Diwan. The elders in the family in Porbandar have no knowledge of the third marriage. After his second marriage they mention the marriage with Putliba. Gandhiji, however, mentions four marriages. This is a discrepancy. If we calculate we find that Kaba Kaka must have been 37 or 38 when he married Putliba who must have been about 15 at the time. Putliba was born in the village of Datrana near Junagadh in a Modh family. Her date of birth must be around 1845. According to one of



the elders, she was married in 1857. If we accept that date, then Kaba Kaka must have been 34 or 35.

From his first two marriages Kaba Kaka had two daughters — Mulibehn and Pankunwarbehn. Pankunwar's husband, Damji Mehta, was found a good post in Porbandar State by Kaba Kaka. Mulibehn had a daughter Anandbehn. Anandbehn's son, Shri Mathuradas Trikamji, was a well-known political worker of Bombay and was Mayor of the Bombay Corporation. Mathuradas began collecting Gandhiji's writings even before Mahadev Desai began the work. He wrote three books in Gujarati on Gandhiji. He was a good follower of his uncle and rendered great service to him. His death in 1951 was widely mourned.

### Brother Who Helped

Gandhiji's eldest brother Lakshmidas *alias* Kalidas was born in 1860. It was with his support that Gandhiji was able to go to England for studies. He suffered privations in order to provide money for Gandhiji's stay in London. Lakshmidas spent later years of his life in the service of Porbandar where he was treasurer of the State. His eldest son Samaldas Gandhi was editor of the *Vande Mataram* \* a well-known Gujarati newspaper of Bombay. During the agitation over Junagadh, Samaldas Gandhi led a band of armed volunteers into Junagadh and was in its first Government established after the Nawab's departure. Kaba Kaka's second son Karsandas was born in 1866. Both Gandhiji and Karsandas married at the same time. Karsandas worked in the police department of Porbandar.

Putliba's second child Raliatbehn was born in 1863. She still lives in Rajkot in Kaba Kaka's own house. Even in her old age she works all day doing household chores. She is very orthodox. She would have joined Gandhiji's Ashram but for her objection to sharing life with Harijans. She visited the Sabarmati Ashram three times but since Gandhiji had adopted a Harijan girl as his daughter

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\* Its publication ceased two years ago.

she would not stay there. In her appearance, voice, use of idiomatic Gujarati and short sentences, she is very much like Gandhiji. Gandhiji himself was born on October 2, 1869. There is no dispute over this date. Kaba Kaka was 47 at the time and Putliba not yet 25. She was about 44 when Gandhiji went abroad. Putliba died when she was 47.

### **Wankaner Episode**

Kaba Kaka's inclination towards religion grew with age. He deliberately led a life of poverty in his last years. Unlike some people who become more and more worldly with years, his idealistic faith became more steadfast in his old age. This is evident from his dealings with the State of Wankaner.

Wankaner, like Rajkot, was a class II State of Saurashtra. It had a larger area and bigger income than Rajkot but a smaller population. The administration, owing to corruption, had become a source of anxiety to the ruler. The officials were not very efficient either.

The ruler welcomed the suggestion that Kaba Kaka should be invited to take over the post of Diwan and began to negotiate with him. Since Kaba Kaka had to leave the Diwanship of Rajkot he made certain conditions before accepting the Wankaner ruler's offer. He wanted at least five years' contract for the post and the right to appoint, dismiss or transfer all officials, except those of the highest class, without any interference by the ruler. He also laid down that he would auction agricultural produce received in lieu of land revenue in his own discretion and would not have to obtain the ruler's consent. If as a result of interference by the ruler he had to leave the post before the expiry of five years he would be entitled to receive full five years' salary deposited beforehand as a security with four prominent businessmen.

The Wankaner ruler agreed to the conditions and deposited five years' salary at the rate of Rs. 600 a month (Rs. 36,000) with four businessmen of the State. Even though the trustees chosen were not independent men of some other State as required, Kaba Kaka did not consider



it proper to raise any objection on this score and went and joined his new post.

After making a study of the conditions he introduced reforms in the administration. The ruler did not like some of these changes and, in spite of the agreement, decided to interfere with Kaba Kaka's work. He sent a letter to Kaba Kaka specifying a particular change and directing that the position should remain as it was. Kaba Kaka did not like this interference, but decided not to protest. Within two months there was another message from the ruler complaining about the transfer of some junior officials. Kaba Kaka's polite but firm reply was that whatever he had done was well considered and in the interest of the State. The ruler after that kept quiet for a while, but soon tried to upset another of Kaba Kaka's decisions in a way that he could not put up with it.

### **Ruler Interferes**

Food grains received as revenue had to be auctioned. The practice was to ascertain the rates in the neighbouring States and sell the food grains on the basis of those rates. Having checked up the prices in other States, Kaba Kaka sold the stock to the highest bidder without consulting the ruler. Some disgruntled officials complained that Kaba Kaka had acted on his own even in a matter of such importance, trying to make out that he had committed an offence. The ruler sent for Kaba Kaka and asked him the prices at which the grains had been sold. Kaba Kaka explained that they had got higher rates than prevailing in the States of Rajkot and Morvi. The ruler asked him to get the traders to the palace so that he could auction the food grains all over again in his presence. When reminded of the agreement under which he could not interfere, the ruler argued that in a matter concerning the State's income he had every right to interfere. Kaba Kaka said he could not obey his instructions having already finished the auction, and went away.

### **Return to Rajkot**

After Kaba Kaka had gone, the ruler sent for the traders. They explained to him that the food grains had been

sold at a good rate and that none of them would bid again since the Diwan had sold the stock to the highest bidder. The ruler found himself helpless, seeing that the traders themselves were in support of Kaba Kaka.

It now became difficult for Kaba Kaka to stay in Wankaner. He wrote a letter to Navalshankarbhai who had brought to him the Wankaner ruler's invitation for Diwanship to begin with. Kaba Kaka pointed out that the agreement had been broken and he wanted to return to Rajkot immediately. Until arrangements for his transport were made he would go without food and drink. The businessmen of Wankaner as well as the ruler's representatives tried to persuade Kaba Kaka to stay, but he did not change his mind. Knowing his temperament they did not press him further. Kaba Kaka went back to Rajkot.

According to my grandfather, Kaba Kaka received a letter from the Wankaner ruler after about two weeks. The ruler had apologized and had also invited him to return to the post of Diwan. Feeling that the letter showed genuine repentance, Kaba Kaka went to Wankaner but at his very first meeting with the ruler he realized that the Raja wanted to continue his interference even in the day-to-day affairs of the State. He, therefore, decided not to resume office and asked that his account be settled.

State officials in those days were not paid their salaries every month. They could buy their requirements on credit and might be paid after six months or a year. Kaba Kaka had not received any salary so far. The ruler, seeing that he had decided to go, asked him to give in his letter of resignation. Kaba Kaka immediately wrote his resignation in which he said that he was leaving because the ruler had broken the agreement and had been interfering in his work. He, therefore, demanded full five years' salary according to the conditions already agreed upon.

The ruler did not like the tone of the letter and refused to accept the resignation unless all mention of breach of the agreement was omitted. Kaba Kaka did not accept the suggestion. His contention was that he had written what



was the truth and there was no other reason for his resignation. The ruler did his best to get the letter of resignation changed and even threatened not to pay his salary in full, but Kaba Kaka remained adamant. The ruler finally suggested that there need be no letter of resignation and offered to pay Kaba Kaka Rs. 10,000 in final settlement. Kaba Kaka's reply was that he would accept either his full salary according to agreement or nothing at all. The ruler tried persuasion. If not for himself at least for his children should he accept the money. But Kaba Kaka was not moved.

### **Long Illness**

A third person present while Kaba Kaka was being pressed to accept the offer, put the bags of money in his bullock-cart. Kaba Kaka immediately removed the bags from the cart and leaving them behind left for Rajkot.

His friends in the British Agency tried to find another post for him. States like Palitana and Mangrol sent him offers, but Kaba Kaka did not want to make a new home in a far-off place. Even when going to Wankaner he had left his family in Rajkot where Gandhiji was studying in the high school.

During this period Kaba Kaka's asthma, from which he had been suffering for some time, became more acute. The ruler of Rajkot visited him in his illness and invited him to take over the Diwanship of the State on getting well.

On regaining his health Kaba Kaka waited for the ruler's invitation, but when none arrived he began to look for a post elsewhere. Negotiations with Junagadh were completed, but before he could go he fell ill again. The Rajkot ruler visited him again and soon thereafter appointed him as Diwan.

### **Last Days**

As Gandhiji has told the story in his *Autobiography*, Kaba Kaka was seriously injured in a road accident on a visit to Porbandar. It was with difficulty that he was able to return to Rajkot. The ruler himself took over the duties of Diwan, but continued to pay his salary to Kaba Kaka.



After about six months Kaba Kaka offered his resignation because of his illness, but the Thakore did not accept it. During this period there was a dispute between the Thakore and his relations over some land. Seeing justice on the side of the ruler's relations, Kaba Kaka made a request to the ruler to give in. The ruler was not much pleased over it, but Kaba Kaka was not the kind of person to withhold his considered opinions. He resigned again. After his resignation was accepted he was given a pension which he received until his death three years later in 1886.

Kaba Kaka bore his long illness with patience and fortitude. A glimpse of how Gandhiji looked after his father during those days is provided in his *Autobiography*. My grandfather told me that Kaba Kaka used to call his son Mohandas by the pet name of 'Manu.' Both Manu and his mother Putliba devoted themselves to attending on Kaba Kaka. There was great fondness between father and son. Once in his last days when someone asked Kaba Kaka who would take his place, he replied gravely, "Manu will bring honour to the family name."

## CHAPTER IV

### EARLY LIFE AND STUDENT DAYS AT RAJKOT

My grandmother used to tell us how attractive 'Manu' (as Gandhiji was called) was as a child. He had a wide shining brow, a well-shaped nose and bright eyes. Being the youngest in the family, he was his mother Putliba's pet. But having to look after a large family she seldom had any leisure for him. It was left to the younger women in the house to play with him. Later it was Rambhabai, the children's maid, who looked after him.

Writing about Rambhabai in his *Autobiography* Gandhiji says,

"But what I failed to get there I obtained from my nurse, an old servant of the family, whose affection for me I still recall.... there was in me a fear of ghosts and spirits. Rambha, for that was her name, suggested, as a remedy for this fear, the repetition of *Ramanama*. I had more faith in her than in her remedy, and so at a tender age I began repeating *Ramanama* to cure my fear of ghosts and spirits. This was of course short-lived, but the good seed sown in childhood was not sown in vain. I think it is due to the seed sown by that good woman Rambha that today *Ramanama* is an infallible remedy for me." \*

#### Active and Energetic

The first three children of Kaba Kaka and Putliba gave them little trouble, but young Mohan was a bit of a problem. Not that he was mischievous or one to annoy his elders. He was not a difficult child but he was exceedingly active and energetic. He was never at one place for long. As soon as he was able to walk about, it became difficult to keep track of him. Since neither Putliba nor Kaba Kaka could find time to look after Mohan, Rambhabai was asked to take charge of 'Moniya,' as the child Mohan was also called by this name. He was three years old at the time.

Gandhiji's eldest brother Lakshmidas was called 'Kala' in the family. The other brother Karsandas's pet name was 'Karsania' and the sister Raliatbehn was called 'Goki'. I went to see her in Rajkot recently. I talked to

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\* Page 47, 1948 Edn.



her about Gandhiji for hours. She was full of reminiscences of Gandhiji. She said she was only about 10 or 12 years short of a hundred. She remembered how affectionately Gandhiji had asked after her on his return from England and again when he came back after his stay in South Africa. He never neglected her when he was in the Sabarmati Ashram and later at Sevagram.

I give here the substance of what she told me. Seven years senior to Gandhiji, she was younger to Kalabhai. Karsandas was younger to her. Moniya, she said, was a cheerful child. He would rush out of the house to play about. Rambhabai had to keep a very watchful eye on him. One day he followed a group of young girls to a lonely temple outside the city. Nobody saw him go with them. A search was made. Kaba Kaka sent people to every part of the town to look for him. The family had quite a few anxious hours until Moniya was brought home by one of the girls. Rambhabai never allowed him out of her sight after that.

### **No Hitting Back**

Moniya seldom liked to stay at home. He would come for his meals and run away again to play in the compound of a nearby temple where he would climb trees or amuse himself in other ways. If one of his brothers pulled him down from a tree or beat him he would complain to his mother. His mother would ask why he did not hit back. His answer would be, "How can you teach me to hit people? Why should I hit my brother? Why should I hit anybody?"

If Putliba explained that there was nothing wrong if brothers hit each other, Moniya would say, "Being elder, my brother can hit me. I shall not hit back. Instead of telling him not to hit me, you are asking me to hit back. Should you not ask one who hits not to do so instead of asking the one who is hit to do likewise?"

Putliba would wonder where her son got his strangely wise arguments.

When he began to go to school he took to his studies without any difficulty. He had very simple habits. Even in



matters of food he would prefer simple fare to sweets and dainty dishes.

### **“Dust School”**

The primary school that Gandhiji has mentioned in his *Autobiography* was a couple of minutes' walk from our house. An old-fashioned teacher taught children to form letters of the alphabet by writing in the dust with their fingers. The school was, therefore, known as Dhooli-shala (dust school).

### **Truthful and Outspoken**

Being a place of pilgrimage, Porbandar has a large number of small temples. During Gandhiji's childhood these temples had greater importance in the life of the community than they have today. As today one sees children taking out little processions of their own with flags and all in imitation of their elders, in those days they played with clay images of gods and goddesses.

Once young Mohan's companions decided to get hold of real images from a nearby temple instead of making do with little clay ones. All the children liked the idea. The youngest of them all was sent into the temple to bring away some of the images. The little boy — let us call him Chandu here — got into the sanctum without any difficulty while the priest was having a siesta. He was collecting the small brass images when their tinkle reached the ear of the priest's wife. As she called out to the priest, Chandu took to his heels. Other boys also disappeared with the priest hot on their heels. Chandu dropped the images in the compound of another temple and all the boys escaped to their houses.

Most of them were from the Gandhi family. The priest having followed them to the home of the Gandhi family would not return without the images. He complained to Chandu's father, who was one of Mohan's cousins. Chandu's father, besides being a short-tempered man, was an orthodox worshipper. He could not ignore what he believed had been a sacrilege. He sent for Chandu, his elder brother and all the other children and interrogated

them not without sternness. Nobody told him the truth. Chandu's elder brother explained that they had been to the temple to play and that was all. But when young Mohan was called, simply and without fear he told the unalloyed truth.

The incident convinced Mohan's companions that he could not be treated as one of them because of his simplicity and outspokenness.

Moniya was quite an adept at various games in vogue among children at the time. His role was that of a truthful witness in all these games. This was specially brought out in games played between Hindu and Muslim children in Shitla Chowk (square) near Gandhiji's house. In the evenings when the boys collected in the Chowk to play games Moniya would act as an unofficial referee even though he was among the youngest and the weakest of all. The Hindu and Muslim boys would wrestle, and it was left to Moniya to decide who had been defeated. Once he had given his decision, there were no objections from either side. All the boys, whether Hindu or Muslim, agreed that Mohan's verdict was the right and truthful one.

#### **Interest in Plants**

It was during this period that Mohan became interested in plants. Since there was no garden attached to the house, he collected a number of pots on the roof of the house. Later, when the family shifted from Porbandar to Rajkot, he had a little garden of his own in the compound of the house.

When he was a high school student he was very regular in his morning walks. In the evenings he would dig in the garden and tend the plants. He had a well-regulated and disciplined life and wasted no time. He was either engrossed in his books or worked in his garden. At the same time he was always ready to look after his father when his help was required.

He was up at dawn and was soon in the garden near the town where other people would collect to have a bath near a well. Young boys would wash their clothes there, competing with one another to see who got them the



cleanest. Mohan was almost always on top. After his bath he would now and then collect a few saplings from the garden to be planted in his own garden. He learnt a good deal about plants and flowers and was in a position to advise his friends and companions on the care of plants.

### **Reputation for Gentleness**

Like some of his other companions, Mohan also tried smoking. But because it was done secretly he did not take to it. On the other hand, he resolved never to smoke. The *Autobiography* does not indicate at what age he took this pledge. He was probably only seven at the time.

Some days ago I met an aged trader in Porbandar who had known Kaba Kaka. Gandhiji, he said, was called Mohanbhai in the locality since he belonged to a well-to-do house and because people of the neighbourhood had regard for him. Nobody tried to be familiar with him or to tease him. He, the trader, was very mischievous as a boy. If he or others like him ever tried to tease Mohanbhai he would gently fold his hands and thus disarm the mischief-makers.

Once, the old man said, he slapped Mohanbhai in anger. Although Mohanbhai was about three years his senior he did not hit back. Instead he took him to his father, Kaba Kaka, who did no more than warn the boy. If Mohanbhai did not like the other boys' rough handling of one another even in play, he would stand aloof and say, "Carry on, but I cannot join you." If anyone was unusually rough he would firmly intervene and tell him to behave.

### **Loyal Friend**

One gets some glimpses of Gandhiji's student life from the reminiscences of his fellow students. If the boys divided themselves into groups and developed a sense of jealous rivalry he would try to bring them together. If the stronger boys bullied the weaker ones, Mohanbhai would side with the weak. While he kept away from group rivalries among boys and wasted none of his time, he was a loyal friend and was prepared to face opposition to maintain that loyalty.



One of the boys became a close friend of Gandhiji when he was at high school in Rajkot. Later this friend accompanied him to South Africa. Without mentioning the name, Gandhiji has indicated how he ignored all complaints against his friend until he had actual proof of his misconduct.

This friend was a Muslim youth. Not because of being a Muslim but because of his bad habits, Gandhiji's elders had warned him against friendship with him. Gandhiji's reply to his elder brother and others was that he would try to reform his friend rather than leave him.

When Gandhiji decided to eat meat it was this friend who helped him to obtain it, but when he decided not to take meat his friend's protests did not have any effect on him.

While in England for study Gandhiji lived very frugally and kept a detailed account of his expenses. He denied himself many things to be able to save whatever he could to be able to help this friend.

On inquiry I have found that there was an element of gratitude in Gandhiji's loyalty to his friend. At the school where they were both together his Muslim friend always sided with the weaker boys and because of his own strength never let the bullies have their way. It was young Mohan's desire to see this gallant youth reformed.

### **Theft of Gold**

In the chapter entitled "Stealing and Atonement" in his *Autobiography*, Gandhiji has related in detail the incident of how he sold a bit from his gold bangle without the knowledge of his parents. The story tells us how forgiving and generous his father was. But the mental struggle that Gandhiji went through at the time of the incident has never been brought out. His elder sister, aunt Goki, has a vivid memory of the whole incident.

She told me,

"One day when Moniya returned home the flower designed on his gold bangle was missing. When father and mother questioned him he said he did not know what had happened and nothing more was said about it. Mohan went to his books but came

back to his mother soon afterwards and told her the truth. Then he wanted to know if father would beat him for his lapse. Mother asked him to go and tell father himself, assuring him that he would not be punished. She even volunteered to tell father not to beat him but Moniya said it was his fault and he should face father himself. He left mother and in a little while handed a note to his father. Father was greatly touched by the letter and fondly told Moniya that he would not be punished."

### **Early Austerity**

Gandhiji gave up all ideas of comfort and luxury even in his early youth. In a letter he wrote in 1901 to his son Manilal, he said, "When I was younger than you are to-day I used to find real enjoyment in looking after my father. I have known no fun or pleasure since I was twelve. If you also try to develop real virtues you will have convinced me that you accept my ideals of education."

How engrossed Gandhiji was in his studies is clear from the following.

When Kaba Kaka was lying ill, Putliba attending on him had hardly any time for anything else. The wife of Gandhiji's elder brother did the household work. Just before his school time Mohan would ask if the food was ready. On being told that his sister-in-law was still preparing dishes he would quietly go and eat whatever had been left over the night before and then rush to school. His father would often try and persuade him to stay a little while longer and have a proper meal, but Mohan was keen not to be late at school.

His father was keen that he should see Mohan married in his life-time. Mohan did not, therefore, disregard his father's wish. He dressed simply for the wedding ceremony, in spite of the prevailing custom of decking up the bridegroom, and returned to his studies soon after the ceremony.

### **Pledges to Mother**

The untimely death of Kaba Kaka put obstacles in the way of Gandhiji's going abroad for further studies. The greatest obstacle was his mother's reluctance to let him go. According to aunt Goki, he reasoned with her for months to persuade her to let him go. He offered to take all



the pledges she wanted him to. He promised not to touch meat, drink or woman and begged her for her blessings. She said her fear was that their family would be excommunicated. Mohan could not see why they should be boycotted if he continued to live a clean life when abroad. How could there be anything evil in going abroad when his heart was pure ? The mother ultimately agreed and sent him happily and with due ceremony.

In his absence Putliba became ill with worry about his well-being. She received the news of his having been called to the bar when she was on her sick-bed. She now became impatient for Moniya's return. Other members of the family tried to console her, but her anxiety continued. She said that if she was not alive when he returned, he should perform purification and thanksgiving ceremonies. How Gandhiji fulfilled his mother's last wish is narrated in detail in his *Autobiography*.



## CHAPTER V

### ORIGIN OF THE PHOENIX SETTLEMENT

It seems to have become almost a tradition in our family that its young men should be influenced more by their uncles than their fathers. My uncle Maganlal Gandhi grew up under the influence of Gandhiji. In turn Magan Kaka had a large hand in my training and development. He very nearly took the place of my father (Shri Chhaganlal Gandhi) and when the word "father" comes to my mind I think both of Magan Kaka and my father.

The two brothers were inseparable. They were about the same age, my father being about two years older than Magan Kaka. The younger brother was the livelier of the two. My father was quiet and simple from his very childhood. In contrast, Magan Kaka was boisterous. He would be up to some mischief or other all day and was not easy to control. Both my father and Magan Kaka passed the matriculation examination about the same time. Since my grandfather's financial position did not permit expenditure on higher education my father accepted a clerk's post in the office of the British Political Agent. During this period Gandhiji returned from South Africa and settled down to practise law. He took my father to help him in his work.

#### **Called to Natal**

Gandhiji had practised for no more than about five months, from July to November in 1902 in Bombay, when he was suddenly called to Natal. During this period my father helped Gandhiji by writing petitions and working as his clerk in some cases.

Gandhiji expected to return from Natal in about two or three months' time. He, therefore, maintained his office in Bombay. Meanwhile somebody had to look after Kasturba and also see to the education of Manilal. The responsibility was left to my father, and Gandhiji fixed a monthly salary for him. The problem of the education of Gandhiji's other sons was not there. Arrangements had been made for the stay of the eldest son, Harilal, in a hostel

at Gondal and the other two, Ramdas and Devadas, were not yet of school-going age.

Maganlal Gandhi accompanied Gandhiji on this trip to South Africa. On arriving in Natal, Gandhiji himself soon went to the Transvaal and sent Magan Kaka to the village of Tongaat, about 30 miles from Durban. Trade among the Zulus of Natal was in the hands of Indians, mainly from Gujarat. The two centres of trade in the jungle of North Natal with scattered huts of the people all around were Tongaat and Stanger. Four or five years before Magan Kaka arrived in Tongaat some members of the Gandhi family had set up a shop there. Among them was Abhayachand Gandhi, eldest son of Tulasidas Gandhi, Kaba Kaka's younger brother. Magan Kaka joined them as a partner and with perseverance soon learnt the ways of the trade. Later, he was sent to Stanger where they had a branch store in the thick forest of that area.

### **Return Delayed**

Gandhiji was delayed in South Africa and after about four months there he wrote to my father to say that he would not be able to return to India for some time. According to Gandhiji's instructions, my father closed down the office in Bombay but continued to look after Kasturba and Manilal's education. This continued for about a year until December, 1903, when my father felt that he should not continue to accept the salary fixed for him by Gandhiji. He, therefore, took a post in a solicitor's office. After about two or three months, Kasturba began to receive letters from Gandhiji, who was then in Johannesburg, suggesting that they might go to South Africa. In one of the letters\* Gandhiji suggested that my father could accompany Kasturba to South Africa if he so wished.

Kasturba's departure was delayed and in the meanwhile my father left with a partner of the shop at Tongaat. It was not easy to get to the Transvaal because of permit difficulties. Gandhiji was to give him work in his office at Johannesburg and arrange for his permit. In the meanwhile,

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\* For this letter and the enclosure thereto please see Appendix A.



he waited in Durban and came in contact with Shri Madanjit, editor of the *Indian Opinion*, a weekly in which Gandhiji used to contribute articles both in English and Gujarati. Shri Madanjit employed my father to summarize news in English and Gujarati from newspapers received from India. My father liked this work and soon Shri Madanjit began to leave the office to him whenever he had to go away. Gradually my father became the editor of the Gujarati section of the weekly on £8 a month.

About three months later when Gandhiji visited Durban, Madanjit expressed a desire to return to India. The *Indian Opinion* was left under the joint management of my father and Mr. West. Shri Madanjit had been taking loans from Gandhiji to meet the expenses of the weekly and his press. In repayment he handed over his press, called the International Printing Press, to Gandhiji.

#### **Ruskin's 'Unto This Last' \***

Having taken over the press and the paper, Gandhiji visited Tongaat. He had a new idea when he saw the little garden behind Abhayachand Gandhi's shop. He felt it would be better for Abhayachand and others if they had an orchard instead of a shop. By this means they would not only increase their income but would also be able to live in touch with nature. At the same time he was thinking of finding means to meet the losses of the press.

Resolving these problems in his mind Gandhiji left for Johannesburg saying that he would be back in Durban after a week to settle the affairs of the press. A week later when he was leaving Johannesburg for Durban, Mr. Polak, who had come to see him off at the station, handed him a copy of Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, suggesting that he should read the book on the journey. That copy of the book is now in the Gandhi Memorial Museum of Delhi.

Mr. Polak was one of those white friends of Gandhiji who believed in vegetarianism and were anxious to work out the pattern of a simple way of life. The book given by

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\* Gandhiji paraphrased it in Gujarati under the title *Sarvodaya*, which was retranslated into English entitled *Unto This Last — A Paraphrase* by V. G. Desai. Pub. Navajivan, Price As. 6.



Mr. Polak made a deep impression on Gandhiji. Ideas yet vague in his mind began to take definite shape. He could hardly sleep that night after reading the book. This finally led to his decision to give up city life for farming.

Mr. West approved of Gandhiji's plan. Within a few days the land for the Phoenix Settlement was bought and arrangements set on foot to shift the printing press there.

In Durban, in the International Printing Press, Mr. West had a salary of £16 a month. An English compositor was paid £18 a month. Others were paid equally well. When the press was shifted to Phoenix and everyone's salary was reduced only two people were taken on their full salary. Several workers did not agree to shift at all. Excepting the two who were paid their full salaries, all others agreed to work on £3 a month.

Within a few days a shed was ready for the press at Phoenix. Gandhiji came from Johannesburg after a little while and stayed there for a month. The first number of the *Indian Opinion* was printed on the treadle machine in one sheet only on the due date, i.e. 24th December, 1904. Soon after the arrival of the machinery of the press Magan Kaka and Anandlal Kaka arrived there.

### **The "Ashram"**

The Phoenix Settlement is in Natal, about six miles inland on the eastern coast of British South Africa. Phoenix used then to be the seventh station from Durban on the North Coast Railway. When Gandhiji started his settlement there was no habitation there. There were sugarcane fields around and the station was used as a centre from where sugarcane was carried. The land bought by Gandhiji was only about two and a half miles away from the station and naturally the settlement was named after the station. The word "ashram" was not used at that time.

Generally Gandhiji used his own language but being in an English-speaking country an English name was almost necessary. Those who lived at Phoenix came to be known as "the settlers". Gandhiji was happy over the name because Greek legend has attributed to the phoenix qualities of purity, sacrifice and immortality. The bird is

supposed to be alone, without a mate. It immolates itself and is reborn from its own ashes.

The land acquired at Phoenix was uncultivated, and except for a piece of land two or three acres in area it had never been ploughed. It was uneven land with rocky mounds here and there. A large part of it was black soil. Not having been cultivated before, it was fertile, soft land, full of wealth for any hard-working cultivator. There was no dearth of rain. For half the year there was hardly a dry week. The dry period in the year was no more than about three months.

### **Snake-infested Area**

In a corner of the land was a little orchard with old orange, mango, guava and mulberry trees. The rest of the land was covered with dry grass. There was a large spring towards the west and another, a dried up one, on the eastern boundary of the settlement. The large spring was perennial and around it were thick trees from the branches of which one often saw thin, green snakes hanging.

The area was full of snakes of different varieties. It was not unusual for one to come across five or six of them in a single day. Some of them were non-poisonous, but there were others which were deadly. There were no tigers or wolves. There were innumerable kinds of birds but one never saw peacocks, parrots or crows among them. Except for the chirping of birds there were no other noises. There were neither dogs nor jackals. Since cows, horses or buffaloes had never been kept there, one could not expect the sound of mooing or neighing. Except for the voices of some Zulus crossing over at train times in the morning and evening on the footpath leading from Phoenix station to Inanda, the place was quiet. Further away, in the evenings one could see a few dim lights. These were the huts of a few scattered Zulu and one or two Indian families who had settled on small agricultural farms. Sometimes, if there were any quarrels among the Indian families, their raised voices could be heard.



### Water Scarcity

The winters were severely cold and breezy while the summer days were hot and long. Drinking water was scarce. Rain water had to be carefully stored away in large tanks for the purpose, and for irrigation water had to be brought in buckets from a far-away stream. This water was not fit for drinking because of heavy layers of rotting leaves in the stream. Nor was it possible to dig wells due to the height. One had, therefore, to depend on rain for drinking water. Until proper roads were made it was not possible to move about with ease owing to heavy growth of grass and bushes, slush after rains and the danger of lurking snakes.

The shopping centre was 14 miles away in Durban. Milk was brought from there. Sometimes the North Indian farmer who lived a little distance away would bring a little milk. For fetching and taking away material for the press and for shopping purposes a mule trap was kept. The Phoenix station was two and a half miles if one went by the footpath, whereas the trap had to make a round of four miles to get there.

It was in such a desolate place that Gandhiji's companions made a home. The shed for the press was large enough to hold the cases for English, Hindi, Gujarati and Tamil types and stools for nearly a dozen compositors. Separate arrangements were made for the English and Gujarati sections of the press and there was a separate office for Gandhiji. Adequate printing machinery, equipment and furniture were fitted up neatly in the shed which was well ventilated and lighted.

A big oil engine produced electricity besides power to run the press. No living accommodation was provided in the shed. Though the shed looked simple from the outside it contained all the conveniences necessary for a press.

Having perfected the arrangements for the production of the *Indian Opinion*, the workers of the press began to give their spare time to setting up their homes.

### New Colony

The staff of the press when it was first established at



Phoenix included a couple of Englishmen, a few Tamil and Hindi-speaking people, one or two Zulus and nearly half a dozen Gujaratis. Those of the workers who had come to Phoenix from Durban at voluntarily reduced salaries were each given two acres of land for cultivation by themselves. With the help of a couple of carpenters all the staff members were able to construct a room of corrugated iron sheets for each. All the houses were built on a higher level and were within 50 to 200 yards of one another. The settlers cleared the wild grass from around their houses and levelled some area to be used as a courtyard. The houses soon took on the appearance of a neat little colony. After building their houses the workers began to plant gardens around them.

My father and Magan Kaka were given four acres of land in three different plots. The largest plot was situated on a high level. At the upper end of this plot, they cleared the grass and built a large square room and not far from it, a small room for a kitchen.

The rooms had raised wooden floors as a safeguard against damp and rain water. This also lessened the fear of snakes and mice. The rooms had proper arrangements for the draining away of rain water and had wide glass windows so that these huts were as airy and convenient as any well-built houses.

### Young Visitors

My father kept the accounts and looked after the Gujarati section of the *Indian Opinion*. Every third or fourth day he had to go to Durban to collect subscriptions, secure advertisements for the weekly and do the necessary shopping. Magan Kaka used to do composing and other skilled jobs. In a short time he became proficient at them. As soon as he was free from the press he would get busy with the carpenters and thus picked up a bit of carpentry. Then he began to take keen interest in gardening, as a result of which in no more than a couple of years our garden was one of the best on the settlement.

When the houses were more or less set up, Gandhiji asked the young men around him to send for their families.

Two young people arrived at Phoenix — Harilal, Gandhiji's eldest son, and Gokuldas, the only son of Gandhiji's eldest sister, aunt Goki. I did not know if they had yet passed from childhood to youth, but to me they appeared to be grown-up people, and I was very much a child in their presence. With their arrival I found two young uncles besides Magan Kaka, who did not scold me but spent some of their time to play with me. By turns they would carry me on their bicycles to Phoenix station and back. They would tie a little cushion to the cycle bar to make me comfortable.

As far as I can remember neither of them had any work or responsibility at Phoenix. Perhaps they had come on a pleasure trip. They were at Phoenix for a few weeks or maybe a few months.

### **Evils of Early Marriage**

When they left, I do not know whether they went to Johannesburg, where Gandhiji was or returned to India. But later, I learnt that Harilal Kaka had joined the passive resistance movement in the Transvaal and had been in gaol for six terms totalling a year of imprisonment during the years 1907 and 1908. He then proceeded to India to continue his studies in an Ahmedabad High School. Gokuldas went to India earlier. He lived in Rajkot with his mother and sister (both widowed). It was a sad day when Gandhiji received a cable from Rajkot that Gokuldas died on the fifteenth day after his marriage. This meant a third widow in the family. The shock of this sudden and premature death of his young nephew not only depressed Gandhiji but also gave a different turn to his way of life. This is reflected in his letter addressed jointly to my grandfather, Shri Khushalchand Gandhi and to another cousin. The letter is dated May 14, 1908.

“Your letter. I have given expression to some of my feelings in my letter to my sister Raliatbehn. The letter is attached. Please read it and ponder over it, and also read it to Raliatbehn.



If she is away with Karsandas, please forward it to her and oblige me by letting me know how she is. Gokuldas is gone. Because of the relationship I feel like crying as I write, but my ideas, vague in my mind for some time, have become clear and I find that we are all caught in a net. The position in which our family finds itself is not very different from that of our country. I am expressing here ideas which are uppermost in my mind.

“Out of a false desire to keep up appearances or wrong ideas of affection we hustle our boys into marriage. We waste large sums of money on ceremonies and then feel unhappy at the pathetic sight of young widows. How can I suggest that there should be no marriages at all? But we should at least have some limits. We push mere boys into misery by marrying them. They get into greater difficulty when they have children. According to our ideals, the end of marriage is procreation. All else is sheer indulgence.

“I shall not say more. You have given me news from your end. But what answer can I give you? I can only tell you what I feel. Although I am younger than you, I am placing my views before the whole family through you. You may take it as my contribution towards the family's welfare. Please forgive me if you consider these outpourings presumptuous. What I have written is after fourteen years of self-study and thought and seven years of practice.”

### **Attitude to Death**

About a week later Gandhiji wrote another letter, this time to Magan Kaka, in which he gave his views on death. At the time the Satyagraha Movement was going on in the Transvaal. General Smuts had ostensibly made a move for an agreement, and Gandhiji's life was in danger in trying to bring the agreement into force. It appears that Gandhiji wrote this letter three months before he was attacked by the Pathan Mir Alam. The letter, dated May 21, 1908, was written from Johannesburg.

It said,

“I have received your letter. You should not be anxious about me. It appears that I shall have to sacrifice myself. I do not believe that Smuts can play false to the end. But people are reaching the limits of their patience. They are ready to make an attack on my life. If this should happen you must not distress yourself. If I give my life for a cause which I consider to be good, can there be a better death?

“If God has found it fit to take Gokuldas away the idea of death should not make us sorrowful. This world is evanescent.



Why should there be anxiety about my leaving the world? It should be enough that I do nothing that is improper as long as I live. The main anxiety should be that we do nothing improper even by mistake. I have not reached a stage where I could attain salvation, but I do believe that if I die following ideals which I have at the moment before me, I can hope for salvation in the future."

To continue with the story of Phoenix, Kasturba arrived there a little after Harilal and Gokuldas had left. She was accompanied by Manilal, Ramdas and Devadas. Gandhiji's house, which had been quiet for so long, now became alive. We referred to it as 'the big house'. Kasturba often visited our house without formality. We all had very great respect for her. She would sit with my mother and aunt for hours. She talked slowly and softly but one could see on her face a shadow of suffering and anxiety.

### **Zulu Rebellion**

I did not know what they talked about but I could sense that Kasturba was worried about Mohandas Kaka. My father would come several times in the day from the press to give Kasturba the latest news. The talk then would centre on the activities of the Zulu people, how far they had reached and what they had done. I do not remember other things clearly but that atmosphere of fear is very vivid in my mind. Today when I read about the Zulu people's rebellion, the anxious face of Kasturba comes before my eyes.

Phoenix was in a Zulu area. Seeing the Indian residents supporting the whites against them the Zulus could have attacked the settlement and completely destroyed it. But it was Gandhiji's greatness that even when he helped the whites he never lost the friendship of the Zulus. In fact, he became known as a well-wisher of the Zulus who became friends of the Phoenix Settlement for ever.

About this time there was an addition to our family. My aunt had a child who was named Keshavlal. The child was company for me. My uncles Ramdas and Devadas would also visit the house, but I could not play with them

as they were both older than I. Ramdas was three and Devadas a year and a half older than myself.

Gandhiji spent a few days at Phoenix after Kasturba's arrival. During his stay there was a meeting at their house every evening. My mother would sing at these meetings. This was the beginning of what later became the daily prayer meetings. Most of the residents of Phoenix, including the whites and the Zulus, attended these meetings at which there were discussions, besides singing of devotional songs. Gandhiji, who in a way presided over the meetings, sometimes spoke and was listened to attentively.

## CHAPTER VI

### NEW EXPERIMENTS IN EDUCATION

One day news came that Gandhiji would be visiting Phoenix. The settlement became alive with excitement. The settlers began to tidy the press as well as their homes.

We, the children, decided to welcome him in our own way. At the suggestion of Ramdas we decided to build a tiny hut to show it to Gandhiji. We collected branches of trees and built the hut high enough to enable Gandhiji to enter it. The roof was covered with grass and leaves. On the floor we spread large sheets of paper brought from the press. We made little lanterns of paper and lighted candles in them. But we could not show all this to Gandhiji as he arrived late at night when we had already fallen asleep.

#### **Fun and Laughter**

Early next morning, after a bath and wearing clean clothes I presented myself at Gandhiji's house. He was talking to somebody on the verandah overlooking a grassy lawn. I went and stood near him. As I watched him I saw gold coverings shining on two of his lower teeth. Later, Devadas told me that the coverings were not of gold but of platinum. Another thing that attracted me was that he laughed more often than anyone in Phoenix in spite of being such an important person.

Soon, other children also collected there. Finishing his conversation Gandhiji began to play with us. He carried each one of us on his shoulders and then dropped us on the sloping garden plot to roll down it. We returned to him again and again to be rolled down the slope by him. This boisterous fun continued for about half an hour after which Gandhiji took us on a round of the settlement. He called at the houses of all settlers to find out how they were. He was wearing a half-sleeved shirt of thin gauze-like white material and a pair of white trousers. We were walking behind him.

Noticing that Ramdas was not among us I began to shout for "Lamdas Kaka". Gandhiji asked me to pronounce



“Ramdas”, but I still lisped. He thereupon asked all the children to shout, “Hip, hip, hurrah.” He asked us to repeat it again and again, and then asked me to shout “hurrah” by myself. When I had succeeded in doing so he asked me to say “Hurr-rrramdas”. I had to repeat the name several times and was let off only when I pronounced the word correctly. This was my first lesson from Gandhiji. The innumerable others which followed were given with the same affection.

### **Common Meals**

I was at the time between six and eight years old. I do not remember if Gandhiji ever stayed at Phoenix for more than a fortnight or a month. Once when he came to Phoenix I had boils on my body. Seeing the boils he called at our house and told my mother to give me tomatoes to eat, not ripe red ones but fresh raw ones to purify my blood. Even though they were bitter, I ate them as they were prescribed as a medicine by Gandhiji.

At that time Gandhiji relished good food. During his stay at Phoenix all the settlers would eat together on Sundays. Special dishes were prepared. Sometimes the meal was arranged at his house and at other times at ours. Friday nights were of importance, for the weekly *Indian Opinion* was dispatched by Saturday. The material for the paper was composed by midday on Friday. It was evening by the time the paper went to the press. There were no servants, peons or other labour. The press workers themselves had to print the paper, fold it, paste the addresses, make bundles and take them to the station. The work would take the whole night and there would still be something left to do after daybreak. Under such pressure of work Gandhiji along with others would keep awake all night. To encourage the staff rice-pudding would be served at midnight.

### **Towards Austerity**

This system of parties and special dishes did not last very long. Gandhiji soon began to make changes in his

way of life. I cannot myself claim to have any special experience of the changes, but the way things changed in our house can give some indication of what was happening. Magan Kaka gave up eating spicy food and would no longer raise his brows if the food was not according to his taste. The westernized ways and the use of modern furniture and cutlery were given up. Instead of my suit of bright material, stockings and boots and straw hat, I had to get along with a pair of khaki shorts and a thick khaki shirt made by my mother or aunt. The special meals gave place to community eating in orchards, the simple food being carried by all from their own homes.

Meanwhile our roaming about was also stopped. Gandhiji founded a primary school which was attended by two or three boys from outside the Phoenix Settlement besides Ramdas, Devadas and myself. The teaching work was taken up by a few of the workers from the press. My father taught arithmetic, Magan Kaka took Gujarati classes, and Mr. Cordes gave us lessons in English. The outsiders were the children of non-indentured Indians. Their huts were on hillocks facing those of Phoenix. They had to walk a mile or more to come to the school. We began to learn to speak in Hindi with these boys.

### **Interest in School**

I do not remember if Gandhiji ever took a class at the Phoenix school, but whenever he visited the settlement he made it a point of coming to the school. He did not pay so much attention to the lessons as to the children's cleanliness. Once he found my ears unwashed and told me to be more careful when bathing so that there was no dirt left anywhere. After that I had to be inspected by my parents before I went to school. Once Gandhiji wrote a letter to my mother asking her to pay greater attention to my personal cleanliness.

After our school was properly organized Phoenix took on a serious atmosphere. There was no more fun and frolic for us. The elders seemed to be more than usually engrossed in their work. Then I saw a trace of sadness on



their faces. I could not understand the reason for a time. But on overhearing the conversation of grown-ups, I discovered that Gandhiji was in some difficulty. Some white man named Botha (General Botha, the Transvaal Prime Minister) had imprisoned both Gandhiji and Harilal Kaka. They had only maize porridge for meals which they ate with wooden spoons. They did not have even enough clothes to wear.

Since Gandhiji did not come to Phoenix for months afterwards, I began to realize how difficult our position was among the whites in that country.

### **Vow of Celibacy**

When the Phoenix Settlement was started in South Africa, Gandhiji was in the prime of his youth. That far-off country had begun to feel the influence of his manifold activities. Like the flowering of trees which do not even wait for the advent of spring, his faculties were coming to fulness. His work in various spheres had begun to give meaning to the life around him.

He was strong and resolute. There was never any sign of wavering. In his personal life and in the social, political and domestic spheres he had started experiments of great significance. On the one hand, he took a vow of celibacy for life and, on the other, he decided to launch a campaign of Satyagraha. He had shown a new pattern of life to the young men around him so that they did not waste their entire youth in merely making money. At the same time he did his best to see that they were not lured into spend-thrift ways in their dress and manner of living.

### **Loss to Society**

This was grand enough, but grander still was the use of these ideas in the field of education. The experiment, however, did not show results because Gandhiji could not devote enough time to it. This was not only a great misfortune for me and the other students in the settlement but a great loss to society.

This was over 45 years ago. Since then much progress has been made in the field of education. Many excellent



systems have been evolved with the help of psychology. Many psychologists or educational experts may not accept Gandhiji's ideas on education. Some educationists familiar with Gandhiji's system have told me that his methods were old-fashioned. Spirituality played such a great part in them that they were almost impractical. But I am convinced that if Gandhiji had devoted as much time to education as experts do his contribution in this field would have been supreme.

The school and hostel that Gandhiji started at Phoenix were based on ideas of universal brotherhood and natural human development, while India's ancient culture was not neglected. The school had teachers from many countries and students belonging to various religions. Gandhiji knew how to derive the maximum benefit from this circumstance.

### **Hostel Arrangements**

He had taken the responsibility of educating the sons of those Indians from Natal and the Transvaal who had been jailed in the Satyagraha Movement. Among these boys were some Christians from Madras and Muslims from Gujarat. The classes were held in little huts, but there was no building for a hostel. Another difficulty was to find a warden for the hostel. Gandhiji faced this problem with courage. He arranged for two or three boys to live with each of the families in Phoenix. He went from house to house to obtain the consent of the women members of each family, requesting them to treat the little ones like their own children. He thus placed before them the ideals of public service and sowed the seeds of the National School at the Sabarmati Ashram and the Gujarat Vidyapith.

Three students joined our household. Among the boys at Gandhiji's house was one named Manikyam who was an adept at slapping smaller boys. He was the monitor of the school and looked after the classes in the absence of the teachers. The school's principal was Mr. Cordes.

It is not easy to say whether the boarding arrangements were better than the school. Since I was with my

parents my views on the 'hostel' cannot have great validity. But in my opinion the arrangements for the boarding and lodging of students were better than the teaching at school. The guest students were well looked after. Every effort was made to see that Muslim boys living in Hindu homes did not feel that they were outsiders. In our house they were given the best room, which was well furnished. On going there I always felt as if I had entered a wealthy house. There were beds for them, bright floor coverings and little tables. The place was always quiet. The 'guests' never talked loudly so that the members of the family might not be disturbed.

### **Mental Conflict**

As far as I can remember, they did not stay with us for more than eight or ten months. During that period the atmosphere in our house was quiet and even grave. There was no light-heartedness or laughter. This silence used to pall on me. I used to be troubled more by it than by the displeasure of my mother or Magan Kaka.

I was too young to appreciate the situation. But looking back I can see that in spite of our family members' efforts to look after the guests, there was a mental conflict between the two. Emotionally they had not achieved the ideal set before them by Gandhiji.

For the students it was an entirely new experience. They had come from the gay life of cities to this place in the jungle, away from their parents. There were no shopping areas for them to walk about and spend money. They had been sent by their parents without any enthusiastic desire on their own part. It was not, therefore, easy for the settlers at Phoenix to look after such guests. Hard-worked housewives had to find time to cook for them. There was always the danger of difficulties arising over the cleaning of their plates and washing of their clothes. Even though the guests were modest and good-natured, it was not easy for them to be at home in the families of the settlers. Gandhiji was in the midst of the second phase of the South Africa Satyagraha. After



inaugurating the school and billeting the boys he went away to Johannesburg and from there to London. In his absence the arrangements did not last long. After that Gandhiji did not again try the experiment of lodging students with families.

The school at Phoenix went on making steady progress. There were frequent changes in it. Every few months the system of teaching, the text-books and the teachers were changed. As long as Mr. Cordes was in Phoenix the school was accommodated in his house. My father, who has collected some material for this book, says that a notice about the Phoenix school appeared in the *Indian Opinion* of January 2, 1909. In the January 9 issue was a special announcement about boarding arrangements. An extract from the announcement reads as follows :

“Workers with families at Phoenix will be able to receive up to eight boys each in their homes. The idea is that the guests should be treated as children of the family. The custom was prevalent in India in ancient times. It should be revived as far as possible. All Indians would be eligible.

“There will be no discrimination in serving food. The boys will have the same kind of meals, with a few changes, as the settlers in Phoenix. They will get half a bottle of milk, two ounces of *ghee*, flour, porridge, rice, green vegetables, fresh fruit, ground-nuts, sugar and bread. The times for serving various items will be according to the rules of the settlement.

“No tea, coffee or cocoa will be served. Our experience is that tea, etc., are injurious not only to children but to grown-ups as well.

“Some doctors believe that tea has led to an increase in diseases. Moreover, tea, cocoa, and coffee are generally produced with the help of slave labour. In Natal, indentured labour is used. In the Congo, cocoa is produced by indentured Negroes who are treated with great cruelty. We know that sugar is also produced through slave labour. It is not easy to go very deep into all this, but in any case the use of tea, coffee and cocoa should be reduced to the minimum. When in India we are propagating the idea of using only home-made products, these three things should be given up.

“It would be convenient to have a uniform dress for the boys. A pair of pyjamas, a shirt, a pair of shorts, sandals, a sun hat, towel, handkerchief, etc., are calculated to cost £1-13-6. The headgear will be according to what one is used to. The sun hat



will be useful when working outdoors. Parents who do not want to spend so much on clothes or do not favour such simplicity can supply their children with a different set of clothes in a separate box. It is not intended to provide the boys with beds. We propose to give them wooden boards, as in jails, for sleeping, as it is felt that they would be more conducive to health. For the same reason we would prefer blankets to quilts and mattresses. The bedding must contain at least three blankets, four sheets and three pillow covers.

“There will be no tuition fees. Teachers will be from among those who work in the press at Phoenix where they are assured of a livelihood. The press has agreed to allow them to work in the school. A committee has been appointed to discuss the system of education and other problems.”

Although this article is not signed by Gandhiji, the style of writing shows that it must be his. The article is in Gujarati and here only a summary of the first half has been given.

### **Hoosen Dawad**

I cannot but write at length about our dear friend Hoosenbhai before I close this chapter. He was the son of Dawad Seth, who came to South Africa from the village of Kathor in the Surat district in his early life some years before the end of the last century. Young Dawad had neither money to sustain him nor the education that would obtain him some job when he arrived in the strange land. He started with a small shop and by his adventurous nature made it a success. He began to purchase properties, and thus made money and built up a good reputation in a few years. His son Hoosenbhai, who was born in Durban, received good education under his care and supervision. Dawad Seth took a leading part in the passive resistance struggle and went to jail several times. Race discrimination denied Hoosenbhai facilities for higher education in the land of his birth. His father sent him to spend some time with Gandhiji in Phoenix. In those days Dawad Seth used to visit our school often with Rustomji Seth and other leaders of the community. Dawad Seth planned a pilgrimage for the holy shrine. Hoosenbhai who was in the party proceeded after the pilgrimage to London to satisfy his desire

for higher education. I can give some reminiscences of the sweet company we had, though for a short time, in Phoenix. His favourite song, “है वहारे बाग दुनिया चंद रोज़।” (The bloom of this lovely garden is but for short days.) that he introduced in our evening prayers, at Phoenix, ever reminds us of the fact ; perhaps, he knew that he was to live only a short life. The stuff that Hoosenbhai was made of can better be known from the memoir that Gandhiji wrote in the *Indian Opinion* dated 1st October, 1913.

“ The rose has withered in its bloom. Young Hoosen has died in the prime of life, leaving a nation in mourning. He was but twenty-two, but he carried on his shoulders a head that would sit well on a wise man of forty-two. Truly do the gods take away those they love best. Had Mr. Hoosen Dawad lived to see the winter of life, I feel sure that he would have left a mark on the history of the Indian Community in South Africa. Not that he has not, by the purity of his life, influenced it even now. But what he was able to do was merely a shadow of what was to come. He was a young man of truth for which alone he lived. He was impatient of cant, hypocrisy and humbug even in those who were his elders. He stood up for truth against all odds. From his early age, he wanted his word to be as good as a bond. He was innocence personified. No evil company could influence him. He influenced his companions, no matter how depraved they might be. Once Mr. Dawad Mahomed wrote to him, asking him to beware of snares that lured young men in London, and of bad companions. He was indignant and wrote almost in these words: ‘ Father, you do not know your boy. Snares cannot affect Hoosen. Bad companions mislead those who do not know where they are. Your son knows where he is. He lives for truth and will die for it.’ To this sterling character, he added a burning enthusiasm for his country, India, which then existed only in his imagination. He had never seen it. But it was only enough that it was the land of his forefathers. He had read about it, and he had learned to love it with a passion that could not be stifled. ‘ O, Mr. Rustomji,’ young Hoosen said to him when he went forward on the 16th ult., as a passive resister, ‘ If I rise from this sick bed, you will find me in gaol. What a glorious death, it would be, to die in gaol for the sake of Truth and Justice!’ He clung to life desperately. But his desire was unalloyed with selfishness. He wanted to live in order to serve his country and humanity.

“ When quite young, he began to hate trade, though Mr. Dawad, his father, was and is a merchant prince. He scorned possession of wealth. He wanted to study. He was placed with me



by Mr. Dawad Mahomed, and the whole settlement had begun to value the golden worth of the boy. He became a loved member of my family. But Phoenix was not enough for him. He liked the life but he wanted scope for his literary and poetical tastes. He wanted to fight his country's battles. He felt a call. He thought (I think erroneously) that it was necessary for him to go to London, and become a barrister, if he was to do any good. He was the idol of his father. He went to London amid the good wishes of all. In London he soon became loved wherever he went. He applied himself to study. And I know that he used to go to Hampstead Heath, sit on the damp grass, read his favourite poets, and lose himself in dreams. He used even to compose poems which, those who can judge tell me, were promising.

“ But it was ordained that Hoosen was not to live. The dread disease that destroyed his body began its operations upon it in London. He tried many cures. He was under the treatment of specialists. He rallied for a time but was never cured. He returned to Durban, and felt better. Dr. Adams, who loved Hoosen, treated him with rare attention. He was better, but only better. He was longing to go to England and study. He went to India and saw it with the eye of reverence. He said in one of his many letters to me, that he wanted not to see the stone work of India. He wanted to see its heart. He went with his father and a distinguished company to the Holy Shrine in Arabia. The pilgrimage made a lasting impression on him. In one of his letters, he broke into raptures over the powers of the Prophet who could summon millions, year after year to pay their homage to the Creator in this special manner. Thence the party proceeded to Constantinople whilst the war with Italy was going on. Young Hoosen was really his father's guide and friend. The whole company leant on him during this visit. The highest in Turkey were seen by them. There, too, in the strange land, Hoosen became the favourite of those who came in contact with him. He parted company with his father there. His second Mecca was London. He must go there to finish his studies. But the fiend never let go the grip of him. He was suddenly taken ill. Mr. Dawad Mahomed received a cable, saying that Hoosen was returning. It told its own tale. The father knew that the son was returning to die in his lap, and so he died, conscious to the last moment, in the lap of a father whose love was rare (I had almost said, supernatural). Mr. Dawad Mahomed became Hoosen's exclusive nurse. For five months and more, this loving father never left the side of Hoosen's bed. It was a privilege to me to make a pilgrimage to Mr. Dawad's house to see the young patient whenever I was in Durban, and it was a treat to see how Mr. Dawad nursed the son, and how the latter relied entirely upon his nursing and no other. Dr. MacKenzie,



assisted by Dr. Adams, treated him. But Hoosen never left the bed that he occupied on his return from London.

“The funeral procession was enormous. Thousands followed the hearse. Hindus from all provinces of India vied with the Mohammedans in paying their respects to the memory of this good youth. Colonial borns mustered in strong force to pay their respects to the memory of one who, like themselves, was born in South Africa. Special trams emptied themselves at Congella (the suburb of Durban where Dawad Seth lived) during practically the whole of the Tuesday (23rd September 1913) on which the funeral took place. All Indian shops were closed for two hours, and so was the Indian Market, by consent of the Corporation. No Indian has ever received the spontaneous tribute to his memory that this young man of brilliant promise received. His death made us all forget for the moment, that we were Hindus, Mohammedans, Parsis or Christians. He, even in his death, makes us realize that we are sons of India after all — we are kith and kin owning the same mother. I have loved to linger on Mr. Hoosen’s character. I knew him as few did. And it has not been my good fortune to meet many young men — aye, even old men — with a spotless character that Hoosen possessed. To me Hoosen is not dead. He lives in his character. May this humble tribute be accepted by Indian youths throughout South Africa in the spirit in which it has been offered, and may we all copy the example set to us by Mr. Hajee Hoosen Dawad Mahomed.”

## CHAPTER VII

### TEACHERS AT THE PHOENIX SCHOOL

When a number of people from various countries got together to work in Phoenix, Gandhiji suggested that they should all benefit from one another. Germans, Englishmen, Africans, Chinese, Parsis, Muslims, Jews, and Hindus, all mixed together happily. Mutual dislikes, ideas of high and low, bitterness and misunderstandings were completely absent. There was not a shadow of any distance or coldness towards one another.

Remembering those days of my childhood I feel that I was part of a great family in an atmosphere of happiness and security. For me, just as my father and Magan Kaka were to be respected and honoured, the German teacher of our school, Mr. Cordes, was also to be respected and honoured. Gandhiji during his life established several excellent Ashrams and schools, but the "Cordes" school was something new of its kind.

#### **Training in Discipline**

Mr. Cordes lived in a thatched mud house surrounded by a beautiful garden. He was very particular about maintaining his house spotlessly clean and orderly.

Being a true German, Mr. Cordes could not stand any softness or weakness. He was keen to see that we developed wiriness of body and increased powers of endurance. Mr. Cordes had his own methods of teaching. I cannot remember him ever shouting or repeating a lesson to din it into the ears of his students. He would make us experience what he wanted to explain. For instance, he got us two feet long pencils with a diameter of half an inch to practise calligraphy. If any one of us did not hold the pencil in the exact position he wanted us to he would be there in a second to take the pencil and hit the offender on the knuckles with it. Everyone in the school had to pay great attention to discipline. After the classes he would make us stand in a line for exercise. We had to drill in a



soldierly fashion. Even the slightest slackness did not go unpunished. At a hint from Mr. Cordes we had to climb trees with the swiftness of a monkey, and in getting down we would have to jump to the ground from the point at which he ordered us to.

Mr. Cordes's methods of inculcating knowledge and discipline among the children included much physical chastisement. None of the elders liked this and Gandhiji secretly disapproved of it. But everyone acknowledged Mr. Cordes's devotion to duty and discipline and his emphasis on physical fitness. The general tendency among the settlers was to put it down to the "German" way of life.

### Foreign Visitors

Magan Kaka used to find time to come regularly to the "Cordes" school to teach Gujarati and arithmetic. We used to study under him very attentively.

Besides our education in the "Cordes" school and the family boarding houses, we also had the good fortune of learning something or other from many Europeans who came to Phoenix.

Mr. Polak often came there. He used to work in Johannesburg with Gandhiji, but he was also keenly interested in the affairs of Phoenix. It was Mr. Polak who gave that book of Ruskin's to Gandhiji which made the Sarvodaya ideal clear in his mind so that it became an active force. He also had a hand in the establishment of the Phoenix Ashram and in the running of the *Indian Opinion* of which for many years he was editor. He accepted the Indian name "Keshavlal", conferred upon him by Magan Kaka, because of his long hair. On Sundays, Mr. "Keshavlal", my father, Magan Kaka and a couple of others from Phoenix would sit in the garden and converse light-heartedly.

### Animal Stories

Mr. Isaac was one of those English guests on whose coming to Phoenix all the children would be happy. He was very amusing. He was always finding ways of making us laugh. Sometimes he would jump like a frog, or surprise



us with a bark. When he told us animal stories it was as if those animals were really before us.

Mr. "Sam" was the engineer at Phoenix. Though he did not give lessons at the school, he was nevertheless like a teacher to us. It was his responsibility to keep the press machines clean and in order and to look after printing and book-binding. We used to wonder how even with soiled hands he would never leave a mark on any book or paper that he handled. He was also a *shikari*. With one shot he could bring down a snake climbing a tree. I enjoyed watching him when he stole through tall grass in chase of deer. He was fond of children. If ever we were naughty and stole fruits from the gardens or tampered with any of the machinery his quick eyes would almost always spot us. He would gently tell us not to do so and we would listen to him. He was a South Indian Christian and his full name was Govindaswamy.

Mr. Quinn, a Chinese friend, was also in Phoenix for some time. I do not remember very much about him except that we used to follow him about in the gardens and to consider his dress and manner of speech very strange.

### Shooting Practice

There was also a Mr. Kitchin (at one time editor of the *Indian Opinion*) who was always occupied with fixing electric lights in one place or another. In the evenings he would scatter tin cans in the field and practise shooting. I seem to remember that he lived in Gandhiji's house and perhaps it was he who built the house. He left Phoenix very early and some years later I heard that he had shot himself.

When Dawad Seth, Rustomji Seth, Omar Seth, prominent Durban businessmen and others visited Phoenix we had to do a great deal of running around in order to fulfil their various needs. As I was interested in the vegetable garden and always knew what vegetables were growing, I was given the job of picking them for the guests. In a way, even these guests were our teachers for they were for us a link with the world outside.

In this manner, even though Gandhiji did not come to Phoenix for months, his protective hand was always there and it was because of him that our jungle school had the atmosphere of an international university.

### **School's Aim**

Gandhiji's own wish was to extend the school up to the matriculation standard, but due to frequent changes in the teaching staff his wish remained unfulfilled and our education remained unstable. Something of Gandhiji's plan for the school was described in the *Indian Opinion* of January 9, 1909. Here is an extract :

“The main aim of this school is to build the character of the students. Study, it is said, is the real training for children. It is through study that they develop a desire for knowledge but knowledge is of many kinds, some of it harmful. If students' character is not formed, they might gain the wrong type of knowledge. Some people become atheists, if taught everything without any plan or method. Others become characterless even if they have received education. The main aim of this school, therefore, is to strengthen their sense of morality.

“Students will be taught their own language, namely, Gujarati and Hindi, and if possible Tamil, besides English, arithmetic, history, geography, botany and nature study. In the advanced stages algebra and geometry will also be taught. The idea is to teach students up to the matriculation standard.”

### **Religious Tolerance**

In the field of education Gandhiji had great faith in religious instruction. His insistence was that children should follow their own religions in their truest form. But he never employed the usual class-room methods in religious teaching.

A proper atmosphere was created by the billeting of boys with the families of settlers in Phoenix. Thus everyone was put on his mettle. All of us were careful to see that no opportunity was provided for criticism of our various religions. Less than half the number of boys in the school were Hindus.

Neither students nor teachers criticized one another's religion, but there was eagerness to hear good things said about each. Christian boys from India proudly displayed their knowledge of English and English ways at their Sun-



day gatherings. The Hindus showed their enthusiasm on religious festivals. The lone Parsi boy described the ways of his religion, and the Muslim boys sang praises of their faith and the Holy Quran. There was never any unpleasantness over differences in religion.

Our parents, however, were not without anxiety about maintaining our cultural purity and about the danger of our being influenced by our fellow students. Gandhiji had no hesitation in keeping together children of various religions. He had fondness for such an idea. But it was not easy for those brought up in a tradition of orthodoxy to develop his faith or accept his high ideals.

### **Parents' Difficulties**

Of the three boys in our house two were Muslims and the one a Parsi. My parents had to work hard enough to keep them in comfort, but Gandhiji had faced Kasturba with a harder test. The boys in our house were quiet and good-natured, belonging to well-to-do Gujarati families. Kasturba had to deal with aggressive boys from Christian workers' families from South India.

My parents were orthodox followers of the Vaishnava creed. I cannot forget how my mother and aunt would purify brass utensils used by Muslim friends of Gandhiji by putting them in the fire. It was also a problem for my father to eat with Muslims. But since he had surrendered himself to Gandhiji he did his best to follow Gandhiji's ideas without protest. He was, however, faced with a dilemma by Gandhiji's intimacy with people of other religions.

I have never actually heard him say anything on the subject, for my father is a man of few words. But in his old diary one finds here and there hints of his mental conflict. Gandhiji at the time was known as "Bhai" (brother) in South Africa. My father in his diary now and again also refers to him as "Bhai".

Below are a few extracts from the diary :

"January 4, 1906: Arrived at Johannesburg station. Rama,\* Deva,† Manilal, Bapu and Mrs. Polak were there to receive me.

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\* Ramdas.

† Devadas.



Reached home at 7 o'clock with them. After a wash everybody went to the table for dinner. Found the westernized style very odd. I began to wonder, but could not decide whether our ways were better or theirs. There was bread, vegetables, *dal*, rice, etc. for dinner. Cocoa was served after the meal. Before the meal Bhai recited a few verses from the *Gita* and explained their meaning in Gujarati. Went to bed at 10 o'clock.

"January 5, 1906: Getting up at 5 a.m. was ready by 6-30. On being asked by Mohandas Kaka, Manilal took my shoes away to polish. This made a deep impression on me which I cannot convey in words. Everyone went out to work without any breakfast. I walked with Bhai to his office, about two miles away. Talked about the *Indian Opinion* on the way. Bhai started work in his office exactly at 9-30 a.m. Seeing a girl working in the office made me wonder. In the afternoon Bhai and others in the office had a meagre meal of bananas and groundnuts. The accounts of the press were then carefully gone through. Returned home with Bhai at 5-30 p.m. I began to wonder again when I found the English friends, the Polaks, mixing freely with everyone.

"January 6, 1906: A few people were invited to dinner at Bhai's house in connection with Mr. Polak's marriage. Among the guests were English people, Muslims and Hindus. I felt that they crossed the limits in their jokes at dinner.

"January 11, 1906: Smith, Polak and Mrs. Polak, who are staying at Bhai's house, behave very freely, which makes me think.

"January 20, 1906: Isa Haji arrived by the Sugarcane Colony train. I went to receive him at the station with Bhai and Omar Seth. At lunch the guests included Mr. Isaac, Mr. Kallenbach, Isa Haji, Omar Seth and Haji Habib. Polak was in Indian dress. I ate my meals separately.

"March 16, 1906: Read in the paper that Bhai has apologized to the Muslims in Pretoria. The news put me in deep thought."

### **Gandhiji's Faith**

These extracts indicate that it was not easy for my father to mix freely with Muslims and Christians. But Gandhiji's faith made him see light and progress where others found darkness and hopelessness. Where others saw difficulties and destruction he found success and good.

To Gandhiji religion was not a dogma or scriptures. He wanted the light of religion kindled in every heart. Not all the children around Gandhiji were well brought up and

without bad habits. But his faith was so great that he hoped to create real representatives of Indian culture even in the midst of modern, westernized surroundings.

Of the three boys in our house Ibrahim made the deepest impression on me. He was as clever a talker as he was a good student. He had clean habits. His way of saying things was such that I would be fascinated. When he talked in praise of Muslims and their many virtues I would listen to him with rapt attention and would begin to feel a kind of smallness in being a Hindu. Paradise would appear before me as a fairy world and it seemed as if Ibrahim himself had stepped out of it. When he claimed that the Hindus had no holy book to compare with the Muslims' Quran, I would feel the inadequacy of my religion. Such doubts remained in my mind until I began to study Sanskrit and to appreciate the social and religious ideals of the Aryan civilization.

I have little doubt that Ibrahim did not want to disparage Hinduism and that it was his deep faith in his own religion that made him talk so often about it. He would also describe city life and its amusements which fascinated me.

Just as my association with Ibrahim had given me a sense of inferiority about my religion, the visiting whites made me feel that we Indians were dirty, brainless and full of faults, while they were clean, faultless and pure of heart.

The whites who visited Phoenix, however, never seemed to try to impress their superiority upon us. They came there not as representatives of the ruling race, but to help Gandhiji in his work of winning over his bitterest enemies through love and suffering. They lived among us not as strangers but as our own. Gandhiji's instructions to us were to give them a wholehearted welcome. These instructions were followed especially by my father and Magan Kaka. They would spend whole days with the visitors trying to meet all their needs and requirements. This made me look up to the whites all the more.

### **Importance of English**

Another reason was their language. I found English being used everywhere. To me this showed their importance. Not only was English spoken by all, but almost all the books available were in English. The beautifully illustrated, interesting books for children were also in that language. The superiority of the language was specially brought out when Magan Kaka would read to us scientific articles and attractive stories from an illustrated magazine called the *Children's Encyclopaedia*. I felt at that time that anyone who did not know English could not claim to be a whole man.



## CHAPTER VIII

### IDEAS ON EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE

Gandhiji's eldest son, Harilal, left home mainly because he did not agree with his father's ideas on education. Harilal was no less intelligent and capable of undergoing suffering than his companions. But since Gandhiji did not favour methods of education followed in ordinary schools and colleges, it became difficult for a sensitive individual like Harilal to remain with him.

Gandhiji himself was a barrister-at-law and had been abroad for higher studies. He made full use of this training in everyday work. Nevertheless, he was determined to keep his sons away from this kind of education. It was not easy to understand this ideal of Gandhiji, as a result of which Harilal broke away from his father in order to have a schooling that would include him among those regarded as properly educated.

#### **Attitude to English**

What I have written about the starting of the school at Phoenix dates back to 1908-09. Before Gandhiji had made these arrangements for our study, Harilal had already left Gandhiji at Johannesburg and gone away to India. He was in Ahmedabad, preparing for the matriculation examination. My father has in his collection an article by Gandhiji written in London dated September 17, 1909. At that time the Gujarat Literary Association was about to hold its third session in Rajkot. It was for this occasion that Gandhiji wrote his views on his mother tongue. The article explains why Gandhiji did not lay very great stress on the teaching of English in the Phoenix school. The article runs as follows :

“In India today Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, etc., are all talking about ‘our country’. At the moment we are not looking at this from the political view-point. From the point of view of language before we can call ‘our country’ our own, it is necessary that there should be born in our hearts a love and respect for our languages.

“It appears that all over India people have begun to give some attention to their languages. This is a heartening sign. One sometimes also hears suggestions that something should be done so that all Indians are able to express themselves to each other in a common language. This is a possibility for the future. Everybody will agree that this language should be Indian in origin. But this step is for the future. We should begin to be proud of being born Indians and similarly we should also be proud of having been born Gujaratis. Without such consciousness we shall be neither here nor there.

“It is necessary for the people of one province to learn the languages of other provinces as well. It is, for instance, not difficult for a Gujarati to be able to learn Bengali, Marathi, Tamil, Hindi, etc. If we spend only half the effort we do in learning English in the learning of Indian languages, there will be born a new atmosphere in the country and a good measure of progress will be achieved.

“Time was when I was enamoured of the ideas expressed by Lord Macaulay on the education of Indians. Others still feel much the same way. Now, however, I feel quite differently on the subject and I also wish others to be convinced that way. But this is not the occasion to go into a detailed discussion of it.

“If my ideas are correct, it is also true that we can consider the problems of Gujarati separately. It is an unhappy state of affairs that Gujaratis should use English as the medium of conversation among themselves. We have impoverished our mother tongue because of our love for English. We demean ourselves by insulting our language.

“When I find myself able to express my thoughts with more facility in English than in Gujarati I tremble. Can those who insult their mother tongue do any good to their country? That the people of Gujarat should give up their own language for some other is unthinkable. If that is so it would be no exaggeration to say that those who give up their language are traitors to their country and people.

“The character of a people is evident in its language. That is why Gujarati, Bengali, Urdu and Marathi associations are being formed. That is a good sign for the future. Those Indians who go away to foreign lands have to take great care and realize the responsibility of not committing the sin of forgetting their own language.

“I have heard those who know English well say that their knowledge of English is greater than that of Gujarati. This is a matter of shame for us. In fact, those of us who write and talk English neither speak nor write it correctly, and that is but natural.



“It is true that we are able to express some ideas more clearly in English, but that, too, is a matter of shame. It cannot be said that we know the English grammar and idiom well. While any Indian can learn the grammar and idiom of Gujarati and would hardly ever make a mistake in the use of the right tense, there is no end of mistakes in the writing of English. Faulty use of the idiom is particularly common. It is possible to have errors in pronunciation in Gujarati but that does not mean that we do not know the language. Errors of pronunciation can be easily corrected.

“One hears it said that a student who wishes to learn English must speak it constantly. Is this not merely an illusion? If when Gujaratis get together, they speak their own language, it does not follow that their knowledge of English is lessened. On the other hand, since we shall then be hearing only Englishmen speak their language our ears will be trained to detect any flaws in it.

“It is not impossible for students who go to England to find time there to read Gujarati books. Those who have to serve their country and do public work will have to find time for their mother tongue. If English can only be learnt at the expense of the mother tongue, it would be in the interest of the country that one does not learn English at all.

“Gujarati, moreover, is no ordinary language. Poets like Narsinh Mehta, Akha Bhagat and Dayaram have sung in this language which is spoken by Hindus, Muslims and Parsis and has, therefore, immense possibilities of development. A single idea can be expressed in three different ways. God is Khuda to Parsis, Ishwar to Hindus and Allah to Muslims, whereas in English there is only one word.

“The Gujarati of Muslims may have Arabic and Sheikh Saadi's Persian influence. The Gujarati of Parsis may have Zoroastrian influence and the Gujarati of Hindus may have Sanskrit influence. Hindus and Muslims, of course, are divided among all Indian languages, but Parsis were a godsend to Gujarati. Gujarati can gain a great deal from their enterprise. Several Gujarati newspapers are in the hands of Parsis, and it is up to them to protect the future of the language. Gujarati is their mother tongue and they cannot leave it. It is, therefore, necessary that they do not murder it. Parsi writers are able to express beautiful ideas with simplicity; but they are the very enemies of pronunciation and spelling.

“It is a point for consideration for every Gujarati that Hindus, Muslims and Parsis are all of them standing separately. Muslims have not yet received any great measure of education because of which their influence on Gujarati is not very great. Hindus and



Parsis will have to help Muslims in their educational development. Gujarati will thereby gain immense support.

“It is my humble request to leaders of the conference which is soon to be held at Rajkot that it should create a permanent committee of representatives of the Gujarati-speaking Hindus, Muslims and Parsis. This committee should keep a check on the literature produced by the three Gujarati-speaking communities and give them advice. It should be made possible for thoughtful writers to get their work looked through by the committee from the language view-point without any payment.

“Further, I should like to say to those Indians who go abroad that they should follow the example of Englishmen and speak their own mother tongue. This is a duty which will contribute to India's progress. There is nothing very difficult in this course.”

In our own homes these ideas of Gandhiji were practised with conviction and determination. My father and Magan Kaka were not at all in the habit of speaking English in the house at Phoenix. If, while speaking Gujarati, I unconsciously used an English word, Magan Kaka would at once check me and want to know the Gujarati equivalent of it. He would even teach me Gujarati words for the common English words in use. My father selected for me simple Gujarati books which he made me read more than once. After that he gave me short and interesting Hindi books and also started me on Bengali. But at that time I was greatly taken up with Gujarati.

### **Advice to Son**

Before finishing this chapter I should like to quote a letter of Gandhiji. Harilal had failed in the matriculation examination having offered French as one of the subjects. The second time, too, he was taking up French. In this context Gandhiji wrote the following letter in 1911.

“Dear Harilal,

“I feel you are unnecessarily wasting time and money on learning French. How can I convince you how worthwhile it would be for you to spend the valuable time you are now giving to French on Sanskrit? The atmosphere with which you are today surrounded has been vitiated; that is why you have thought of French. Even if you took a year more than you otherwise would to get through the examination with Sanskrit as a subject, how much better it would have been! Sanskrit is the key to all Indian languages, and you have denied that to yourself.

I am writing to you because you have again offered French as a subject for the examination.

“ Even now I want you to think and at the cost of having to spend an extra year on the examination, give up French for Sanskrit. Even if this should mean greater expenditure, I shall be happy.

“ Nevertheless, do what you really feel like. I do not wish to be an obstacle in your way. Consider this as the advice of a close friend.”

### **Whites' Influence**

Our family at Phoenix was greatly influenced in its manner of living by that of the whites. Gandhiji himself was very keen that the homes of Indians in South Africa should in no way be disorderly. A simple manner of dress should be accompanied with beautiful homes. When European guests visited our homes they should find cleanliness and neatness which should not fail to please. They should be made to regret their attitude of looking down upon coloured people merely because of their dark or yellow skin.

I remember how, when Gandhiji was expected to visit us, my mother would inspect every corner of the house. It was my job to get the window panes — our house had five or six glass windows — shine like mirrors. It was because of Gandhiji's wisdom that we saw some of the good habits of the English and made them our own but endeavoured to leave out the bad. Had he not taught us to admire the good qualities of the English, we would not only have developed an attitude of bitterness towards them but would also have been attracted to some of their bad habits.

Gandhiji wanted to borrow from the whites what he considered to be good for us. On the one hand, he would try to keep his countrymen away from the use of the English language at the cost of their own and from becoming Anglicized ; on the other, he would attempt to draw their attention to some of their good points. While dazzling the whites with the beauty and neatness of the Indian homes at Phoenix he never forgot to impress upon us the importance of ancient Indian culture. He was keen that we



should take full advantage of modern science in work in the fields, in the home and elsewhere. At the same time he wanted us to live a life of extreme simplicity, identifying ourselves with the poorest in the land.

### **Desire for Simple Life**

Both my father and Magan Kaka were devoted followers of these ideas. One of Gandhiji's letters on the subject written jointly to the two brothers would not be out of place here. The letter was as follows :

"Dear Chhaganlal and Maganlal,

"I feel it would be a good thing if I were not forced to take to practising law once again. That is a heart-felt desire. I wish that we should all live a life of extreme poverty in Phoenix as long as I am alive. I pray for such a life. But all indications are to the contrary. It is difficult to visualize a time when we can live a life of real and complete poverty. The help given by Dr. Mehta seems to be an obstacle. As long as he continues to help us, that blessed state of possessing nothing for tomorrow will not be ours. I consider such a state of invaluable gain because it is this state that predominantly exists in the world.

"The Buddha and others like him lived in such a state, and in future, too, people like him will live in the same state. I am convinced that one cannot attain self-realization without being in that condition. I am beginning firmly to believe that Narsinh Mehta and Sudama have given us the right teaching in this respect.

"While indulging one's senses one cannot claim to be non-attached by arguing that the senses are merely performing their natural functions. None of us has the right to call himself non-attached until he accepts real poverty. There is no basis for the view that a king is in that position because of spiritual merit. One might say that a king attains kingship through his own deeds. But such deeds cannot be equated with spiritual deeds.

"If we accept these ideas and place before ourselves the high ideal I have described, God may give us the opportunity to live such a life."

### **Stress on Fearlessness**

From the very beginning of the life at Phoenix Gandhiji had laid stress on fearlessness. I remember having heard at the time that when Gandhiji slept in the open at Phoenix a couple of young men would keep guard at night because his opponents were in an aggressive mood and his life was in danger. It was feared that he might be



attacked any time. When Gandhiji came to know of the guards he told the young men not to keep watch any more.

A similar incident which took place in Johannesburg has been related in Raojibhai Patel's Gujarati book, *Gandhijini Sadhana*. He writes :

"A German friend of Gandhiji, Mr. Kallenbach, would follow Gandhiji in order to protect him. One day as Gandhiji picked up his coat before going out, he noticed something that looked like a revolver in a pocket of Mr. Kallenbach's coat which was also hanging there. He discovered that it really was a revolver. He asked his friend why he carried a revolver. Obviously embarrassed, Mr. Kallenbach gave an evasive reply. The revolver, he said, just happened to be in his pocket.

"Gandhiji smilingly asked him: 'Have Ruskin and Tolstoy in any of their books suggested that one should carry a revolver in one's pocket for the fun of it?'

"Mr. Kallenbach, a little more flustered, said: 'I have heard that some rascals are planning to attack you.'

"Becoming grave, Gandhiji asked: 'And you want to protect me from them?'

"'Yes, that is why I follow you about.'

"Gandhiji was amused. Laughingly, he said: 'Well, now I need not have any fear. You have taken over from God the responsibility of protecting me. As long as you are there, I can consider myself invulnerable. Your affection for me has made you dare to usurp the prerogative of God.'

"Mr. Kallenbach was touched to the quick.

"'What do you think?' continued Gandhiji. 'This behaviour does not show any faith in God. The Almighty is there to protect us. You must give up your efforts to protect me with the help of a revolver.'

"Mr. Kallenbach humbly replied: 'I have acted wrongly. I shall now no longer be anxious on your account.' Saying this, he put the revolver away."

### **Attack by a Pathan**

Only a few days after this incident, a Pathan named Mir Alam attacked Gandhiji with an iron bar on one of the roads in Johannesburg. The incident is well known. It would be interesting to quote what Mir Alam himself said about the episode.

The banishment of Mir Alam from the Transvaal by the South African Government had forced him to return

to India. When Mir Alam arrived in Bombay, a Gujarati newspaper, *Akhbar-i-Saudagar*, in its issue of May 29, 1909, wrote the following note about him.

“ Mir Alam, who is 35, is a resident of Johannesburg where he made his living by making cushions and mattresses. During the Boer War, when Lord Roberts’ army went to the Transvaal, Mir Alam joined it and went there along with it. He was given a certificate on leaving the army and a special permit to live in the Transvaal. When asked what reward he had received for having risked his life for the British Government, he made a wry face and with a deep sigh remarked: ‘ Isn’t forced exile from the Transvaal reward enough ? ’

“ Asked why he had attacked Barrister Gandhi, he explained that Indians in South Africa had started a campaign under the leadership of Barrister Gandhi against the move to have a register containing finger-prints of Indians. When the Government were on the point of yielding, negotiations for a settlement were started between General Smuts and Barrister Gandhi. Other Indians were not consulted before the agreement was made. Barrister Gandhi accepted the terms of the agreement under which the finger-print register was to be kept.

“ This registration, however, was to be voluntary. There was to be no compulsion. But the Indians had fought against the move to maintain a record of their finger-prints. Seeing that that point had been conceded the Pathans there were greatly agitated. They were all very angry with Barrister Gandhi. When he saw the Barrister walking along with Naidu and other companions, he attacked him with an iron bar. Barrister Gandhi was seriously injured and bled profusely from the head. Even then he refused point-blank to proceed against a brother Indian and suffered in silence. The police, however, arrested Mir Alam for disturbing the public peace and sentenced him to three months’ rigorous imprisonment.

“ Soon afterwards there was an announcement saying that General Smuts had gone back on the terms of the agreement and was not prepared to amend the legislation as originally proposed. Indians, thereupon, began another campaign, and Mir Alam was externed from the Transvaal. He had a piece of land worth about £ 300 on a 22-year lease in the Transvaal. He had been asked to leave the country before he could do anything about it.”

### **Letter to Gandhiji**

On arriving in Bombay Mir Alam wrote a letter to Gandhiji in broken English. The purport of the letter is given below :



“I have reached Bombay. I hope you are well. I have got an account of the Transvaal happenings published in a Gujarati newspaper. On reaching the Punjab I shall get it published there as well. Kindly let me know if the Government comes to an agreement about the law. I hope you will be good enough to give me all the news about the court case. I shall attend the Anjuman-i-Islam session in Lahore and give an account of the situation in the Transvaal. While in Lahore I shall meet Lala Lajpat Rai and seek his advice. When I get to the Frontier I shall talk to my friends and shall do what I possibly can. I shall do my best and shall go to Afghanistan and acquaint people there with the Transvaal happenings. My regards to Mr. Kachalia, Mr. Omar Seth, Mr. Dawad Mahomed, Mr. Parsi Rustomji and all others in the organization. Kindly read this letter at one of its meetings.”

## CHAPTER IX

### EMPHASIS ON SERVICE AND CHARACTER-BUILDING

Gandhiji always laid stress on the moral aspect of education. He repeatedly said that he valued moral teaching more than book knowledge or scholarship. In this context I feel I should quote a few letters of Gandhiji.

The following are extracts from a letter addressed to my father then in Rajkot. The letter is dated January 23, 1902.

“ Dear Chhaganlal,

“ It would be a good thing if stories from *Kavyadohan* (a collection of stories from the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavat*, etc., written by the ancient poets of Gujarat) are read to Gokuldas and Harilal. All the volumes of *Kavyadohan* are among my books. It would be well if you read and paraphrased the stories of Sudama, Nala and Angada. The story of Harishchandra may either be read out of a book or merely related to them. It is for the moment not necessary to read to them plays by English poets. They will not enjoy them as much. Moreover, the benefit to be derived from our ancient poets will not be got from English poets. You must see that the boys behave themselves well in the class. Also write and tell me who are the others whom you teach these days.

“ You must be very careful to see that none of the boys picks up any bad habits and that all of them endeavour to follow the path of truthfulness.

“ Besides teaching them you must also see that they take exercise.”

The above letter from Johannesburg shows that Gandhiji's views on education were in no way vague even before the idea of the Phoenix Ashram was conceived and he had read Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. The aim of education was very clear in his mind.

When this letter was written I was a year-old baby living in a tiny attic in Bombay. By the time I arrived in Phoenix some years later and was old enough to play about, Manilal Kaka had grown from childhood to youth. Gandhiji at that time wrote to him letters of great significance. In a way he was the first student at Phoenix and



we young children later received the same education. Here are a few of those letters.

“ Pretoria Prison,  
“ 25-3-1909 ”

“ My dear Son,

“ I have a right to write one letter per month and receive also one letter per month. It became a question as to whom I should write. I thought of Mr. Ritch, Mr. Polak and you. I chose you as you have been nearest my thoughts in all my reading. As for myself I must not, I am not allowed to say much. I am quite at peace and none need worry about me.

“ I hope mother (Kasturba Gandhi) is now quite well. I know several letters from you have been received but they have not been given to me. The Deputy Governor was good enough to tell me that she was getting on well. Does she now walk about freely? I hope she and all of you would continue to take sago and milk in the morning. And now about yourself. How are you? Although I think you are well able to bear all the burden I have placed on your shoulders and that you are doing it quite cheerfully, I have often felt that you require greater personal guidance than I have been able to give you. I know too that you have sometimes felt that your education was being neglected. Now I have read a great deal in the prison. I have been reading Emerson, Ruskin, Mazzini. I have also been reading the *Upanishads*. All confirm the view that education does not mean a knowledge of letters but it means character building. It means a knowledge of duty. Our own word (केळवणी) literally means training. If this be the true view, and it is to my mind the only true view, you are receiving the best education — training — possible. What can be better than that you should have the opportunity of nursing mother and cheerfully bearing her ill-temper, or than looking after Chanchi (wife of Harilal Gandhi) and anticipating her wants, and behaving to her so as not to make her feel the want of Harilal (then in gaol as a passive resister) or again than being guardian to Ramdas and Devadas? If you succeed in doing this well, you have received more than half your education. I was much struck by Nathuramji's introduction to the *Upanishad*. He says that the Brahmacharya stage *i.e.* the first stage is like the last that is the *sanyasin* stage. This is true. Amusement only continues during the age of innocence that is up to 12 years only. As soon as a boy reaches the age of discretion he is taught to realize his responsibility. Every boy from such age onward should practise continence in thought and

deed, truth and the not taking of any life. This to him must not be an irksome learning and practice but it should be his enjoyment. I can recall to my mind several such boys in Rajkot. Let me tell you that when I was younger than you are, my keenest enjoyment was to nurse my father. Of amusement, after I was 12 I had little or none. If you practise the three virtues, if they become part of your life, so far as I am concerned, you will have completed your education—your training. Armed with them, believe me, you will earn your bread in any part of the world, and you will have paved the way to acquire a true knowledge of the soul, yourself and God. This does not mean that you should not receive instructions in letters. That you should and you are doing. But it is a thing over which you should not fret yourself. You have plenty of time for it, and after all you are to receive such instruction in order that your training may be of use to the others.

“Remember please that henceforth our lot is poverty. The more I think of it, the more I feel that it is more blessed to be poor than to be rich. The uses of poverty are sweeter than those of riches.

“You have taken the sacred thread. I want you to live up to it. It appears that leaving one’s bed before sunrise is almost indispensable for proper worship. Do therefore try to keep regular hours. I have thought much over it and read something also. I respectfully disagree with the Swamiji\* in his propaganda. I think that the adoption of the sacred thread by those who have for ages given up is a mistake. As it is we have too much of the false division between *shudras* and others. The sacred thread is therefore today rather a hindrance than a help. I should like to elaborate this view but I cannot for the present. I am aware that I am expressing these views before one who has made a life-long study of the subject. Yet I thought that I would pass on to the Swamiji what I have been thinking over. I have studied the *Gayatri*†. I like the words. I have also studied the book the Swamiji gave me. I have derived much benefit from its perusal. It makes me more inquisitive about the life of Swami Dayanand. (His interpretation of) the *Gayatri* and several *mantras* of the *Vajasaneya Upanishad* is totally different from that given by the orthodox school. Now which meaning is correct? I do not know. I hesitate straightway to accept the revolutionary method of interpretations suggested by Swami Dayanand. I would much like

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\* Swami Shankaranand, a preacher of the Arya Samaj, who visited South Africa around 1908.

† A Vedic metre of 24 syllables; a very sacred verse repeated by devout Hindus, especially Brahmanas.



to learn through the Swamiji's lips. I hope he will not leave before I am out, but if he does leave, he will kindly leave all the literature he can or can send it from India. I should also like to know what the orthodox school has said about Swami Dayanand's teaching. Please thank the Swamiji for the hand-made socks and gloves he has sent me. And get his address in India. Show the whole of this letter to the Swamiji and let me know what he says.

"Do give ample work to the gardening, actual digging, hoeing etc. We have to live upon it in future. And you should be the expert gardener of the family. Keep your tools in their respective places and keep them absolutely clean. In your lessons you should give a great deal of attention to mathematics and Sanskrit. The latter is absolutely necessary for you. Both these studies are difficult in after life. You will not neglect your music. You should make a selection of all good passages, hymns and verses, whether in English, Gujarati or Hindi, and write them out in your best hand in a book. The collection at the end of the year will be most valuable. All these things you can do easily if you are methodical. Never get agitated and think you have too much to do and then worry over what to do first. This you will find in practice if you are patient and take care of your virtues. I hope you are keeping an accurate account. It should be kept of every penny spent for the household.

"Please tell Maganlal that I would advise him to read Emerson's essays. Those essays are worth studying. He should read them and mark the important passages and finally copy them out in a note book. The essays to my mind contain the teaching of Indian wisdom in a Western guide. It is refreshing to see our own sometimes differently fashioned. He should also try to read Tolstoy's *Kingdom of God is Within You*. The English of the translation is very simple. What is more Tolstoy practises what he teaches.

"I hope the evening service continues and that you attend the Sunday service at the Wests.

"As soon as you have read and understood my letter you may commence writing your reply. Let it be as long as you want to make it.

"And now I close with love to all from father."

### **Aim of Education**

Another letter written to Manilal in the middle of 1909, says :

"Dear Manilal,

"You have lost heart in thinking about what you are going to do. If I were to answer the question for you, I would say that

you will do what is your duty. For the moment your job is to look after your parents. Beyond this you need not worry. Your parents will take care of that. When they are no more, that responsibility will fall on your shoulders. This much you can be certain about, that you are not going to practise law or medicine. We are poor and wish to remain so. Money is necessary for existence alone. The development of Phoenix is our duty because through it we can seek self-realization and work for our country. Rest assured that I always have your well-being in my mind.

“Man’s true profession is that he should develop his character. It is not necessary to learn something special in order to earn money. If one follows the path of righteousness one need never starve. And if such a situation arises, he is ready to face it fearlessly.

“You must continue to study whatever you can with a peaceful mind. My eyes fill with tears as I write this, because I am not able to see you. I want to assure you that your father will never be unkind to you. Whatever I do is for your good. When you are serving others you will never be helpless. You must be convinced of that.”

In another, written about the same time Gandhiji says :

“Dear Manilal,

“So you cannot answer the question what class you are in ? Next time when you are asked the question, you can say you are in Bapu’s class. Why do you worry about your education ? If you want education to be able to earn a livelihood, it is not right because God provides for everybody. You could earn a living by doing a little labour. But we have to dedicate our lives to Phoenix or to such work that leaves no room for earning a livelihood. If you wish to study for the sake of your country, then you are already doing so. If it is for self-realization, then you must learn to be good, and everybody says you are good. That leaves one point—that you want to study for more work. For that you need not hurry. Continue with whatever you can do in Phoenix. The rest can be seen later. If you have faith that I am always thinking about you, then give up worrying yourself.”

The following letter from Johannesburg was written at the end of 1909.

“Dear Manilal,

“As long as you continue to follow the path of righteousness and do your duty, I shall remain unworried about your studies. It is sufficient that you follow the rules of conduct laid down in the scriptures. If for the sake of your interest and to



increase your knowledge you take to academic learning, I shall help you in it, but I shall never complain if you make no progress in your studies. Nevertheless, once you make up your mind one way or the other, you must hold fast to that decision. Write to me about your work in the press, what time you get up and what you do in the field."

About the same time my younger uncle Jamnadas Gandhi, who was studying in Rajkot, also had some correspondence with Gandhiji. Some extracts from those letters are worth quoting.

"I am not against the education imparted in schools but against the kind of stamp it gives one. The first shortcoming of modern school education is that the teachers lack requisite moral character. Secondly, they are rather distant from their students. Thirdly, students have to waste time in studying superfluous subjects, and fourthly, schools are generally a symbol of our shackles."

In another letter Gandhiji said :

"I am not against good schools, but I feel that a crowded school cannot be a good one. Actually, a school is that in which boys spend all the 24 hours. If that is not so, the student receives two different kinds of education."

With Gandhiji, morality had the foremost place in his philosophy of education. This fact he made clear to his son Harilal in a letter dated 20th March 1911.

"There is absolutely no reason to be ashamed for being weak in arithmetic and literature. You could have mastered both these subjects well if I had given you enough opportunity. The practical knowledge that boys (in India) have obtained is not due to education ; but the credit for it goes to the unique mode of life in India. Leanings toward modern education are growing daily, looseness in morals lurks in and self-interest receives undue attention. In spite of such undesirable factors, the orderliness, uniformity, frugality etc., that you see in us is the legacy of our great ancestors.

"My object in writing this to you is to give you consolation and my desire is that you should dive deep and see the things yourself. It is not meet to see them superficially and treat cause and effect as one and the same.

"I do not want to stand in the way of your studies or other ambitions that you may have, provided they are within the bounds of strict morality. Hence you can pursue your study in India to your fill. I may disagree with your views, but so far as your character is concerned, I entertain no anxiety...."

### **Pledges — Key to Progress**

A letter written long ago by Gandhiji to Magan Kaka has come to my hands. It has almost fallen to bits, yet it is legible. The date is there, but not the year. Since the letter refers to certain differences in Phoenix, it was probably written in 1909. Here are some extracts from the letter :

“You are in any case like Lakshman to me, but by writing such a firm letter you have proved to be Bharat. The more I think about K.’s behaviour the more I feel like crying over his helplessness. I cried when H. disappointed me. I cried again when R. thieved and betrayed my trust. Today K. has reduced me to the same condition. I love and trust him so much that I suffer for his lapse as if it were my own.

“At prayer this morning my mind wandered, and I thought again and again of K.’s behaviour. If K. wished to leave Phoenix, he could have gone in a proper manner. As it is, he has shown himself wanting even in ordinary decency. That is the limit. It shows that we have yet to struggle hard. It also shows that pledges are necessary. A pledge means giving one’s entire mind to what one wants to do. There are any number of obstacles if the mind is kept open. Pledges are the key to progress. ‘As long as I can help it I shall not eat meat,’ is a poor pledge which will lead one to eat meat. ‘Even at the cost of my life I shall not eat meat,’ is a firm pledge which will ensure success and lead one to progress.

“It was this firmness which enabled me to keep the three pledges I took before going to England. K. did not take that kind of firm pledge. He did tell me that he had taken a pledge that he would stay in Phoenix, but it seems that he did not mean it from his heart. That is why he has been reduced to this condition.

“If you wish you may send this and the two accompanying letters to K.”

### **Control of Body**

During this period Mr. West, who was manager of the *Indian Opinion*, fell ill. Gandhiji was not in Phoenix during Mr. West’s illness, but how anxious he was about him is evident from the following two letters written to Manilal from Johannesburg in 1909.

“Real learning lies in doing good to others without in any way feeling superior about it. You will appreciate this more



and more as you grow older. What can be better than attending on the sick? A greater part of one's religion is contained in that.

"We must think dispassionately about having given chicken soup, etc., to Mr. West. In the case of Ba I would rather have been prepared for her death than give her such food without her consent. One must not value the body above the soul. Those who recognize the soul as distinct from the body will not try to protect the body at the cost of non-violence. This is all very difficult but those who are pure of heart understand it instinctively and act upon it. The idea that the soul can do good or otherwise only while it is in the body is grossly untrue. This misconception has been and is responsible for so many evil deeds. The body has been given to us to be subjugated and kept in control."

\* \* \*

"Your looking after Mr. West and serving others is the best kind of study. He who does his duty is constantly learning. It is not correct as you say in your letter that you have had to give up your studies. You are studying by attending on a sick person.

"It is true that you have had to give up reading and writing, but one does not always get the opportunity of serving others. Literary education can be had later on. Have faith that if your mind is pure you will not fall sick by attending on the sick. Even if you did fall sick in doing so, I should not be anxious on that account. To improve one's way of life is the right learning, the rest is all illusion."

### Problems of Phoenix

In 1909 the Satyagraha struggle was in its crucial stage. But even in the midst of it Gandhiji did not lose interest in Phoenix as the following letter written on April 26, 1909, from Pretoria Jail shows.

"Convict No. 777,  
"Pretoria Prison,  
"26-4-1909"

"My dear Henry (Polak),

"Nothing has caused me so much worry as the financial question. I hate the idea of Phoenix being in debt. That is what the office debt means. Besides the jewellery, then some of the law books, that is, the books I got from England and the law reports should be sacrificed. Also the large safe in the office and the encyclopaedia in the revolving case. The law books may be placed before Mr. Playford, Benson or Godfrey if he is doing well. If none of them can take any or all up, you may circulate a list. They should go at cost price, less ten per cent.

The safe should fetch at least £15. Godfrey owes for the Encyclopaedia (Curtis's). You know Curtis got £5 from me. The amount does not appear in the books. It might now be collected.

"I had a long letter from Manilal not badly constructed. I see Mrs. Pywell (Mrs. West's mother) is proud of her granddaughter. She considers her to be the prettiest....Waldo (Mr. Polak's son) who may be claimed to be a Phoenixite in posse is the pattern to be beaten. It is a hard feat. I should like to know how Cordes's lecture went off and where it was given? Has Thakar brought any books and types from Bombay? I notice that the Thakars are staying with Chhaganlal. He like Millie (Mrs. Polak) has a habit of suffering mutely. But the suffering tells on both of them. They therefore make the position of friends embarrassing. I am therefore anxious that Chhaganlal should not overdo things. He is of nature, as his mother puts it, of being baked even under the green leafy tree. I have found that trait in him ever since I have known him as a grown-up boy. And I have seen no reason to change my opinion. Please therefore tell him that he must not tax himself....I should like all in Phoenix to read Tolstoy's Life and Confessions. Both are soul-stirring books. They can be easily read in two days. The Gujaratis should read Kavi's (Shri Rajachandra) two volumes, the books I had got. They may give ten minutes of the half hour evening service and half hour of the hour's service on Sundays...The more I consider his life and writings, the more I consider him to have been the best Indian of his times. Indeed I put him much higher than Tolstoy in religious perception. The books I have read have afforded me the highest solace. They should be read over and over again. As English books are concerned Tolstoy is incomparable in my opinion in chastity of thought. His definition of the purpose of life is unanswerable and easy to understand. Both Kavi and Tolstoy have lived as they preached. Kavi writes from richer experience.

"Will you ask Chhaganlal to write Revashankar Jagjivan & Co. to let me know what I owe them and what they advance monthly to my sister?

"Manilal is naturally somewhat dissatisfied with his studies. But it is inevitable. We are in the experimental stage and the first students have to be victims. However let him learn which is given to him. I hope one of these days to examine him. He was sure of his geometry lessons but he was found wanting (in them). Let him cultivate regular and studious habits and learn to rely on himself. One of these days I may be able to undertake part of his tuition myself....I wish the boys should take from Manikam lessons in Tamil. I am glad Kitchen was in Phoenix for a day. Manilal does not mention whether he was pleased with his stay



there. I hope everything was made to make him comfortable there. I suggest to Maganlal that now that he has learnt so many English pieces by heart, he should commit to memory some Tamil sentences. Is Chanchi cheerful? Or does she brood over her separation from Harilal? Does Mrs. Gandhi now take part in the household work? Pray, thank Dr. Nanji for his attention to Phoenix settlers. He is ever adding to the debt I am under to him. What is the progress of the school building? I think Chhaganlal should represent Mr. Gora on my behalf that he should consent to the boarding allowance to be raised so as to free the guardians from eternal worries about half pennies. I am glad Swamiji (Shankaranandji) is prolonging his stay. I hope to learn from him about the sacred thread on meeting. I hope he received my letter addressed to him at Pietermaritzburg from the train. I am anxious that he should do everything he can to promote the goodwill existing between the Hindus and Mahommedans. I expect Anandlal to keep to his promise, not to abandon his studies and to make the garden smile. Please ask West to continue the Sunday services in spite of difficulties, if any. During Mrs. West's illness, they may be held elsewhere, but so far as possible should not be omitted. Will you please have the Phoenix part copied and sent to West? Then all can read it and let Chhaganlal give me a detailed reply embodying messages from all who have any to send. I would expect a letter from Chhaganlal at the latest on the 7th May. That should give him ample time."

### **Value of Suffering**

The ideas that were exercising Gandhiji's mind at the time were expressed by him in several letters written to Magan Kaka.

In one letter he said :

"One has to suffer greatly in order to serve truth. It is difficult to find examples of those servants of truth who did not have to undergo physical suffering. If one has faith one can find joy in physical suffering. This idea is worthy of acceptance."

How eager Gandhiji was at the time to promote independent thinking is clear from the following letter to Magan Kaka :

"Dear Maganlal,

"As you read one book after another you will be able to think for yourself. Every book has some shortcomings. That is natural. The stamp of an author's character is inevitably found in his writing. Imperfections are, therefore, natural in the writings of all men. As we pick out and throw away the hard

grains before cooking lentils, similarly should it be in study. When you have developed your analytical faculty it will be possible for you to be discriminating."

" Blessings from Mohandas "

### **Truth and Celibacy**

Here is another letter.

" Dear Maganlal,

" All else except the spirit is evanescent. It is necessary not only to go on reminding ourselves of this thought but to keep ourselves engrossed in work connected with it. As I think more and more about truth and celibacy my mind fills with joy over their importance. Celibacy as well as other aspects of morality are inherent in truth. Even so I often think that celibacy has the same high position as truth itself. I am of the firm belief that through these two all obstacles can be overcome. The real obstacle, of course, is our own mentality. If we are entirely independent of external factors for our happiness we shall no longer pay attention to what others say, but shall think of only what we should do."

Here is an extract from another letter.

" Even if the whole world is against what I have told you I shall not be disappointed. This is the truth, not an expression of conceit. Our desire is not only to serve India but also to improve ourselves. That should be the ideal. The rest is vain. One who has not realized the self has realized nothing."



## CHAPTER X

### HOW *HIND SWARAJ* WAS WRITTEN

It was Gandhiji's view that those who want to serve their country must purify themselves like gold. A true Satyagrahi could be sure of success against his opponents if he had been through the furnace of suffering.

In South Africa, the purity of Satyagrahis had begun to be tested. In the second phase of the movement, their numbers were greatly reduced, but they had gained the sympathy of the world because of their shining example. In the year 1909-10, when the Union of four provinces was created and consolidated, the Botha Government made up its mind to remove the Satyagrahis out of their way. Using the law, or even disregarding it when they found it necessary, they began to employ their power for repression.

#### **Ill-treatment in Jail**

In the rigorously cold climate of the Transvaal, the nights were frosty. But the Satyagrahi prisoners were given only two light blankets. From early morning they were mercilessly forced to break stones or dig tanks while their fingers were numb. They were given poor food which was in no way nourishing. The jail officials were ill-mannered and rude. In spite of these difficulties, the Satyagrahis willingly put up with the jail sentences and courted imprisonment by deliberately disobeying the law. This attitude enraged the Government. They were not satisfied with the repression under written and unwritten laws, and therefore, took recourse to banishing Satyagrahis from the country. Seventy-five Satyagrahis were forcibly put aboard a steamer and sent off to India. They were treated as prisoners on board. There were immense difficulties regarding their food and clothing on the steamer. Many of the Satyagrahis had to leave their families, land and other property behind in South Africa. The suffering they had to go through was so great that the young Satyagrahi Narainswami lost his life on the journey. Another young

Satyagrahi lost his life in jail in the Transvaal. They were the first two martyrs in the history of Satyagraha.

To Gandhiji the Transvaal struggle was a fight for liberty. He implored the Satyagrahis to obey their will and conscience rather than the will of the State which was in conflict with their inner-voice — the voice of the soul. According to him if liberty was ability to act according to the dictates of one's conscience one could only achieve it through self-suffering and not by physical force.

### **World-wide Protest**

Fear and the difficulties to be faced discouraged some of the Satyagrahis from carrying on. Their numbers were, therefore, further cut down. Banishment and confiscation of property held back others. But those of the Satyagrahis who did survive came out with added enthusiasm and stood up to the merciless injustice of the Government. The result was that a voice of protest against the injustice of the South African Government arose all over the world.

The credit for the conduct of this movement goes chiefly to Tamilians and Parsis for it was they, when the majority of the other communities had failed, who stood solidly to bear the brunt of the battle and discharged their duties brilliantly. It was, therefore, that Gandhiji had issued an appeal to Tamil brothers to forge ahead in spite of heavy odds, before his going to prison for the third time in 1909.

As has been mentioned previously, Gandhiji went to England and Mr. Polak to India to carry Gandhiji's message to the people and educate public opinion. Mr. Gokhale \* gave his utmost help and support to Mr. Polak. The Servants of India Society † undertook to create public opinion in

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\* Shri G. K. Gokhale whom Gandhiji called his political guru was a great Indian patriot. He was a moderate in politics and the founder of the Servants of India Society.

† A society founded by Shri G. K. Gokhale consisting of men pledged to devote all their life to the service of the country on such allowances as the society may be able to give. Its work covers many fields : political, social, economic, educational etc. It conducts several institutions throughout the country.



India. Through Mr. Gokhale's efforts, the Legislative Assembly legally put an end to indentured Indian labour being sent abroad. The law was passed in 1910. Before this Sir Ratan Tata, the great philanthropist of the time had sent Rs. 25,000 for the relief of the Satyagrahis in South Africa. Because of strong public opinion banishment of Satyagrahis from South Africa was also stopped.

Gandhiji was not able to achieve much in London. General Botha, then in England, tried to create a rift between the members of the South African Indian delegation. But these diplomatic tactics were of little avail against Gandhiji's steadfastness and attitude of goodwill, though he had to return from England empty-handed. He heard with equanimity the South African ruler's challenge that "in the law of South Africa, racial differences will remain and if Indians continue their resistance, they will have to face even greater difficulties." Gandhiji realized that Satyagraha in South Africa would have to be carried on over a long period.

### Financial Help

In this connection Gandhiji has written as follows in his book, *Satyagraha In South Africa*.\*

"The deputation which now returned from England did not bring good news. But I did not mind what conclusions the community would draw from our conversations with Lord Ampthill. I knew who would stand by us till the end. My ideas about Satyagraha had now matured and I had realized its universality as well as its excellence. I was, therefore, perfectly at ease. *Hind Swaraj* † was written in order to demonstrate the sublimity of Satyagraha and that book is a true measure of my faith in its efficacy. I was perfectly indifferent to the numerical strength of the fighters on our side.

"But I was not free from anxiety on the score of finance. It was indeed hard to prosecute a long protracted struggle without funds. I did not realize then as clearly as I do now that a struggle can be carried on without funds, that money very often spoils a righteous fight and that God never gives a Satyagrahi or *mumukshu* ‡ anything beyond his strict needs. But I had faith in

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\* P. 232; Pub. Navajivan, Edn. 1950, Price Rs. 4.

† *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*, Pub. Navajivan, Price As. 8.

‡ Pilgrim bound for the eternal city.

God who did not even then desert me but raised me from the slough of despondency. If, on the one hand, I had to tell Indians on our landing in South Africa that our mission had failed, on the other hand, God relieved me from the financial difficulty. As I set my foot in Cape Town I received a cable from England that Mr. Ratanji Jamshedji Tata had given Rs. 25,000 to the Satyagraha funds. This sum amply sufficed for our immediate needs and we forged ahead."

### **Fight for Principle**

It would, I feel, be relevant to quote here the reply Gandhiji gave to Lord Ampthill before leaving England.

"Those I am speaking for are poor and few in numbers. But they are courting death. They are fighting both for practical relief as well as for a principle. If one of these two has to be abandoned, they will prefer to stick to the principle and fight for it. We are conscious of General Botha's power and might, but we consider our pledge more powerful. That is why we are ready to die in order to keep that pledge. We shall not falter in our determination. We are confident that if we stick to our resolve, God in whose name we took our pledge will help us to keep it. Few as we are, we shall keep our pledge and shall keep alive the hope that our strength to face suffering will in the end bring about in him a change of heart and he will repeal the Asiatic Act (the Act to restrict immigration of Asians and other coloured people)."

When, after accepting the challenge for a struggle, Gandhiji left London, he had some time to himself on the voyage. Entering the Transvaal meant jumping once again into a raging fire. But even the little time on the voyage he had to himself he did not spend in taking much needed rest.

It was characteristic of Gandhiji that he remained hopeful when everything around him was enveloped in darkness and everyone around him was despondent. Some of this hope and cheerfulness could not but be reflected in those around him. It was during such a period on his voyage that Gandhiji presented to the world that invaluable book *Hind Swaraj* which ranks very high in all his writings. In this book Gandhiji has given an outline of his entire philosophy of life and expounded the



basic principles of Satyagraha. He has explained how a single worker of character can, without any means whatsoever, face a whole army of people, however strong it may be. He has made it clear that for true victory the only successful weapons are a life of simplicity and a high moral character.

It was on the steamer *Kildonan Castle* that Gandhiji returned to South Africa. He was not interested in any of the amusements and amenities on the ship. He, however, made use of the good, strong stamped stationery of the ship for the manuscript of his book. It was fortunate that the manuscript was found intact several years later. This Gujarati manuscript has been published in facsimile by the Navajivan Press, Ahmedabad. The book first appeared in the *Indian Opinion*. There was no need after that to keep the manuscript. But my father tells me that he kept it so that it might one day be of use. When, during the Rowlatt Act agitation in India, it was found necessary to print the book, my father sent for the manuscript which was lying safely in Phoenix and handed it over to the Navajivan Press.

### **No Change in Draft**

Turning over the pages of the manuscript one realizes Gandhiji's genius as a writer. In the 275 hand-written pages only three lines have been scratched out. A few words here and there have been changed. When Gandhiji tired of writing with his right hand, he wrote with his left. There are 40 pages, including a whole chapter at the end of the book, which he wrote with his left hand.

In an introduction to the Gujarati edition Gandhiji writes,

“I have written 20 chapters on the subject. I have dared to put them before my readers. I wrote them only when I could hold myself no longer. I have read and thought a great deal on the subject and have also exchanged views on it with as many Indians and Englishmen as I could in the course of my four months' sojourn in England in connection with the Transvaal deputation. I consider it my duty to present to my readers those ideas which

have now become convictions with me.”

“ Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi,

“ *Kildonan Castle*,

“ 22-11-1909 ”

This date shows that Gandhiji completed his book in less than ten days. (A reference in the *Indian Opinion* shows that the *Kildonan Castle* left London on November 13, 1909.)

If one were to sit down to copy the book and work eight hours a day it would take eight days at the normal speed of writing. There are 70 pages in the printed book, and Gandhiji wrote all that as if in one breath. For 40 years after that Gandhiji continued his work for the same ideals. Many a time he was asked if he wanted to make any changes in the book, and his answer invariably was, “ Except for withdrawing the word ‘ prostitute ’ used in connection with the British Parliament which annoyed an English lady, I wish to make no change at all.”

### **Name not Important**

How truly Gandhiji had determined to fashion his life after the ideas of his book is evident from his letters written during that period. Here are some.

“ Union Castle Line,

“ R.M.S. *Kildonan Castle*,

“ 24-11-1909 ”

“ Dear Maganlal,

“ I do not know when we shall be able to meet. That is why I am giving you all my replies here and now. This time during the voyage I have been working without a break. You will know of my labours from the letters and articles I have sent to Mr. West and others. I wish to say a great deal, but that can only be when we meet. For the moment I shall only write what is urgent.

“ Phoenix should not be given any other name. I do not wish my name to be connected with anything. Only my work should remain. It is only when my name is forgotten that my work will remain. This is not the time to get involved in thinking out names. We are experimenting. How can we worry ourselves about names ? When we have to think of a name, we shall have to find a neutral word, a word which does not bring in the Hindu-Muslim question. The word Phoenix has been found by chance and it fits well. For one thing it is an English word and it does honour to those in whose territory we are. It is free from any personal associations. As for its meaning, the legend is that the



bird Phoenix is reborn from its own ashes so that it never dies. Like Phoenix we shall become ashes but even so we shall not die. That is our belief. For the moment, therefore, the name Phoenix is adequate. We can leave it to the future to consider it again. Just now our path and conditions are like that of the Phoenix."

" Blessings from Mohandas "

" Union Castle Line,

" 27-11-1909 "

" Dear Maganlal,

" After reading Mr. MacIntyre's letter about the financial position in Johannesburg and after writing one to Mr. West I wish to express the ideas which are uppermost in my mind. Please show this letter to Purushottamdas.

" The test of Phoenix is now at hand. There will be no more money coming in from Johannesburg. It is our pledge that as long as there is even one person alive in Phoenix, if nothing else, we shall at least publish one page of the paper and circulate it among the people. Do not let things be disturbed there. You must put up with anything that anyone says. Remember always to work for the main thing, and if anything else has to be sacrificed for it, it must be done. The main thing is that Phoenix must not be abandoned and the paper must be published. To get this done if it is necessary to give up something else, it must be done. We do not wish to idolize and worship the paper, but only to keep our pledge. Our triumph is not in continuing the paper but in keeping the pledge. Getting the Transvaal Law abolished is not anything wonderful. Keeping our pledge is all. In keeping the pledge lies the purification of our souls. That is the only thing that should be encouraged. Mr. West may go to Durban, but the office must continue. If you like you may send Manilal.

" I am telling only the two of you that if Manilal wishes and Ba permits we must throw Manilal into the Satyagraha struggle. This will calm his restless mind. He has also asked that of me. If that is not possible, he should go away to Durban and you can then stay at Phoenix. But make this arrangement only if it is necessary. You must make up your mind that even if funds are not forthcoming from anywhere you will not feel helpless and discouraged. You must tell everyone that even if no money is forthcoming you will manage to earn it somehow and carry on the work at Phoenix. You must let it be known that even if nobody else remains at Phoenix you will stay on till life's end. Others will follow your brave example provided your courage is free of arrogance and boastfulness and is the courage of inner strength and steadfastness. It should be true courage, not a mere show

of it. It should be bravery, not mere bravado. You can rest assured that such courage never goes unnoticed. It always has effect.

“Make any changes you find necessary. Even if some changes do not appear to be proper, you can let them come. It is futile to insist on having one’s way involving oneself in the idea of gain and loss. We strongly believe that it is through our efforts that we obtain food. It will be a good thing if you realize that God who gave us life will also provide the means of living.”

“Blessings from Mohandas”

Along with this long letter to Magan Kaka, Gandhiji wrote a short one for Ramdas Kaka. This letter shows how keen Gandhiji was to make changes in the life in his own home.

“Dear Ramdas,

“Do not be annoyed with your father because he is not bringing anything for you. I did not like anything. What could I do if I did not like any European article? I like everything Indian. The people of Europe are all right but not their ways of life.”

“Blessings from Bapu”



## CHAPTER XI

### GOKHALE'S VISIT TO SOUTH AFRICA

It was feared that as soon as Gandhiji returned to South Africa he would be arrested, but the Botha Government had by then changed their tactics.

Gandhiji arrived in Cape Town from England on November 30, 1909. From the letters written during his return voyage on the steamer *Kildonan Castle* it was clear that he had realized that it would be necessary to continue the Satyagraha struggle for quite some time, perhaps for years. He was, therefore, anxious to prepare the Transvaal Satyagrahis for the hard future before them.

#### **Fewer Satyagrahis**

The Satyagraha movement was in a critical stage. Since July 12, 1908, the day on which permit forms to enter the Transvaal were burnt in a bonfire in their thousands, jail going had gone on for a year and a half. Every Satyagrahi who came out of jail after completing his sentence returned to it after a short interval of two or three weeks. Almost one-third of the total Indian population of the Transvaal had either suffered jail sentences or banishment. Two thousand out of eight thousand Indians in the Transvaal had left the place out of sheer disgust. The number of jail sentences had crossed the 2,500 mark. Some Indians from other provinces of South Africa did at times come to the Transvaal to join the movement, but 90 or 95 per cent of them were from among the Indians settled in the Transvaal.

Indians had gone to South Africa not on a spiritual mission but to earn a livelihood and managed to keep themselves and their families alive by small shop-keeping or such other business. In these circumstances it was only natural that the number of Satyagrahis going to jail should decrease from some thousands to a few hundreds.

General Smuts who was becoming increasingly dominant in the Government was by no means devoid of political sense. He believed that as the number of

those who went to jail for violating the law had gone down, similarly the remaining few Satyagrahis would tire of their journeying to and from jail and weaken. The Government, therefore avoided arresting Gandhiji and thus causing a new uproar. Gandhiji entered the Transvaal several times without a permit. He also informed the Government of this. He wrote to them that since they jailed poor helpless hawkers for entering the Transvaal without a permit, he, their leader, was more guilty and it was injustice not to send him to jail. Even then the Government did not arrest him as action against him would have increased his influence.

### **Home Wound up**

Not having succeeded in going to jail, Gandhiji decided to live an even harder life. Within six months of his return from England he completely wound up his home and family life. His practice of law, which had up to now continued along with work for the country, was given up for good. He left his family and himself to society for support for he was confident that as long as one serves society with all one's strength, God provides for him through that very society.

When Gandhiji saw that the question of maintenance of the families of those Satyagrahis who had gone to jail was becoming difficult, he began to think of putting them together in one place. The amount spent on rent for separate accommodation for them would have sufficed to maintain 25 or 30 families.

Phoenix was more than 300 miles away from Johannesburg and it was in another province. It was, therefore, necessary to find a place, away from the town, in the Transvaal itself. Mr. Kallenbach bought 1,100 acres of land near Lawley station. The land was bought on June 4, 1910, and two days later Gandhiji arrived there to settle down along with a large number of people. This was the Tolstoy Farm. Within less than seven months of writing *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhiji had taken a big step towards the goal defined in it.



Gandhiji was 40 years of age at the time. His practice was flourishing. His junior solicitor and staff were all whites. He could, if he liked, have continued to earn a relatively large income with which he could have helped others, but he had no desire to be called a philanthropist. He had, of course, saved nothing for himself or his family.

### **Loan from Fund**

It happened once that Gandhiji lent £300 to a man who was urgently in need of money. Gandhiji's own income hardly ever remained with him. It was spent as it came on the maintenance of the Phoenix Ashram and the running of the *Indian Opinion*. He, therefore, helped the man in need out of money belonging to the Natal Congress funds lying in trust with him. But after he had given away the money he was greatly disturbed.

He later told a friend :

“That night I could not sleep. I wondered why I should have committed such a sin. What right had I to take money out of a public fund even out of affection for someone? If that money was not returned soon and if I were suddenly to die how would I then repay the debt? These thoughts filled me with anxiety. I turned my mind to God and determined to collect that money as early as possible and never again to allow myself to use public fund money for anybody. Then only was I able to go to sleep.”

The very next day on arriving in his office Gandhiji received a telegram about a case in which 90 Indians were being accused of crossing the Natal Transvaal border. Gandhiji immediately caught a train for the village where the 90 Indians were and took from each of them an advance of three guineas as his usual fee and also one guinea each for the Satyagraha fund. He defended the 90 Indians before a magistrate and got them acquitted. The loan was thus made good.

### **Work in Fields**

When Gandhiji left Johannesburg and went to settle on the Tolstoy Farm, there was not even a shed there. One had to walk half a mile to fetch water. The market was 21 miles away in Johannesburg and food and other necessities had to be brought from there.

Gandhiji and Mr. Kallenbach, we heard, had started working in the fields along with African labourers. They themselves dug the hard ground to plant fruit and other trees. Gandhiji had also started making experiments in his diet which had weakened him. But still he worked as hard as, if not harder than, the others, even though, he sometimes fainted from weakness. As for Mr. Kallenbach, he was working even harder.

After his arrival at the Farm, Jamnadas Kaka began to send us regular letters from there. He would tell us how people at the Farm had begun to take saltless and sugarless food. His letters were full of details about who had given up salt or sugar and for how long. The letters made a deep impression on us at Phoenix and before long quite a great deal of change came about in our food too. It became more and more simple and austere every day. Magan Kaka, who never enjoyed food unless it was really spicy, at times completely gave up even salt.

In one letter Jamnadas Kaka told us how Gandhiji as well as many others at the Farm had begun to cut their own firewood. Magan Kaka endeavoured to put into practice whatever we heard was done at the Farm.

In brief, the object of the Tolstoy Farm was to implant in those who enjoyed its hospitality "the spirit of Tolstoy, plus a practical knowledge of country life, and of the way to make the best use of it."

### **New Routine**

I was waiting excitedly to go and live with Gandhiji at the Tolstoy Farm and be educated there. Meanwhile, Gandhiji sent away his youngest son, Devadas, to Phoenix. On the day when Gandhiji and Devadas were to arrive only Devadas alighted from the train. Gandhiji being busy had stayed behind in Durban. For a minute or two I could not recognize Devadas — his lean figure, his simple dress and close cropped hair in place of his former long stylishly cut hair made him look so different. I wondered at this change and watched him carefully all the two and a half miles of the way home. I gathered from his talk with Virjibhai



that Gandhiji had sent Devadas to Phoenix for three months to enable him to learn composing. While in Phoenix he would continue to follow the routine adopted at the Farm.

Gandhiji himself came to Phoenix the next day for a few hours. He discussed with my father and Magan Kaka details of Devadas's study. He also spoke to Devadas about starting to eat saltless food from the next day. Another thing he decided upon was that Devadas should work in the fields from two every afternoon. After settling these two matters Gandhiji returned to Johannesburg. By this time Gandhiji himself had decided to give up sugar also.

With Devadas's arrival in Phoenix, I was completely taken up with him. His daily routine became my routine also. After getting ready early in the morning we studied Gujarati, arithmetic and English and did transcription. In the afternoon when he went to the press to learn composing I would sit and study. In the evening we would play for a little while before going to bed.

Sundays were real holidays. Throughout the week we ate saltless food, but on Sundays we would devour salty dishes as if we were making up for the whole week's abstinence. After lunch on Sundays we would go for long walks, fly kites and do some gardening. But Sunday evenings brought with them the prospect of six saltless days and we would be down-hearted for a while.

This went on for nearly three months. But this time I was restless to know whether I would be allowed to go to Tolstoy Farm. The question, however, did not arise as Kasturba herself came to Phoenix. Gandhiji's home was alive once again, and even though Devadas now lived in his own house, our daily companionship was in no way affected.

### **Turban Sent For**

One morning Magan Kaka returned home from the press about two hours before the usual time. Kasturba was also with us at the time. He went to her and said, "Here

is a letter from Bapu. He needs a turban. Mr. Gokhale is to come and Bapu will be going to Cape Town to receive him. As a mark of respect to him Bapu feels he should wear a turban when he goes to the harbour."

I had heard a great deal about Gandhiji's turban though I had never seen him wearing one. But newspapers had made it quite famous. I had seen many pictures and cartoons of Gandhiji wearing a turban. It was nearly a year and a half earlier that Gandhiji had given up practising law. While closing down his office he had also closed down his house and sent away everything from Johannesburg to Phoenix except a few clothes suitable for life on the Tolstoy Farm. Now he wanted his turban to be brought out from among the discarded clothes. Kasturba was not quite sure if the turban was still fit to wear, since it was an old one. Still she looked for it and handed it the next day to Magan Kaka to be sent by parcel post to Gandhiji. The turban was boat-shaped made of card-board with a thin covering of black muslin, which had at places frayed.

On Saturday afternoons we had a little leisure to stroll about since the weekly paper was despatched on that day by the morning mail. One Saturday afternoon, Devadas and I were going for a walk towards the Phoenix railway station. There was no proper road to the station but only an uneven by-path, broad enough at some places but very narrow at others. On the way there were several streams which during rains washed away parts of the path. For several years day after day we had used that path but nobody had ever talked of repairing it. We were, therefore, surprised that day to see scores of indentured workers busy repairing and widening the path. We did not understand it at all. Asked, one of the Indian workmen told us that India's great leader, Gokhale, was arriving and the road was being put right so that he could drive through.

### **Enthusiastic Welcome**

I wondered what interest the whites could have in this visit, but Devadas told me that Mr. Gokhale was a great leader and was a guest of the Government. It was a matter of prestige for the whites to repair the road.



A few days later I saw pictures in the *Indian Opinion* of the welcome given to Mr. Gokhale on his arrival. In one picture in an imposing open carriage were Mr. Gokhale and Gandhiji wearing his turban which suited him well. The carriage was surrounded by large crowds of people.

Mr. Gokhale was given a very warm welcome by the Indians of South Africa. There was so much enthusiasm that even the whites were affected by it.

In Phoenix there was a change in our daily routine. In Durban Indian boys and girls were to take part in sports and the winners were to be awarded prizes by Mr. Gokhale. The students of our school at Phoenix were also invited. Even though there were no more than seven or eight of us, including sons of indenture-free workers, who could go, Magan Kaka trained us with great enthusiasm. We spent almost half the day practising for the 100 yards race, half-mile race, three-legged race, high jump, long jump and other items.

Hearing about the preparations being made to welcome Mr. Gokhale in Johannesburg and other places, we were restless to be in Johannesburg ourselves. We could not go that far, but we managed to obtain permission to go as far as Maritzburg. A train carrying Indians who were going to welcome Mr. Gokhale was to leave Durban for Maritzburg. In Durban we met Jamnadas Kaka at the house of Seth Rustomji. He had been sent by Gandhiji to see to the necessary arrangements. He told us about Mr. Gokhale's visit to the Tolstoy Farm and the preparations that were made for his welcome. Everyone had been impressed by the simple decorations made with the help of things available at the Farm.

### **At Maritzburg**

We spent the night at Maritzburg. Early next morning we walked three miles to the station along with people who had come from Durban. To the special train which had come from Durban had been attached a saloon provided by the South African Government for Mr. Gokhale. He was in his compartment with Gandhiji and

one or two others. We were allowed to enter the saloon by Gandhiji and were introduced to Mr. Gokhale. He was wearing a plain shirt and was bare-headed. We noticed that his hair was greying. He smiled at the two of us and then returned to a book he had been reading.

Gandhiji recognized Mr. Gokhale as his political teacher and, therefore, when the latter came to South Africa, he treated him with extreme reverence and regard. He looked after Mr. Gokhale and ministered to his physical comforts himself.

Once, late at night, Gandhiji happened to wake up. He saw that the light in Mr. Gokhale's room was still on. He went to Mr. Gokhale's room and asked, "What are you doing so late?"

"I am jotting down points for my speech tomorrow," he replied.

"We do not want your speech if it means spoiling your rest."

"Then, shall I tear up what I have written?"

"Yes, do."

"Well, here goes. I have torn it. But it is all there in my head." Saying this Mr. Gokhale repeated all that he had written and thrown in the waste-paper-basket.

### **Feat of Memory**

I have heard of another such incident. Mr. Pragji Desai once mentioned to Mr. Gokhale that he had heard about his amazing memory and requested him to repeat a portion of one of the speeches he had made in the past few years. Mr. Gokhale thought for a while and then repeated parts of a speech he had delivered at a college at Oxford in the year 1904.

Gandhiji has written in his history of *Satyagraha in South Africa* :

"Gokhale had a rule in life which seemed to me a bad rule. He would not permit any one except a servant to wait upon him. He had no servant with him during this tour. Mr. Kallenbach and I entreated him to let us massage his feet. But he would not let us even touch him, and half jocularly, half angrily said, 'You all



seem to think that you have been born to suffer hardships and discomforts, and people like myself have been born to be pampered by you. You must suffer today the punishment for this extremism of yours. I will not let you even touch me. Do you think that you will go out to attend to nature's needs and at the same time keep a commode for me? I will bear any amount of hardship but I will humble your pride.'

"Gokhale bore everything cheerfully, but till the last never accepted the service which it was in our power to render. He had to take the food, etc., from our hands, but that he could not help." \*

The crowds that collected to welcome this great man when he came to South Africa left a deep impression on me, and his speeches, too, were considered to be very good as well as effective. They brought hope to the Indians and made the whites conscious of the need to do them justice.

### Visit to Phoenix

In spite of his delicate health Mr. Gokhale visited most of the important towns in South Africa from Cape Town to Durban as well as the remote rural areas of the Tolstoy Farm and Phoenix. When he left for India he had reaffirmed the determination of the Indians in South Africa to die, if necessary, in the cause of their honour.

After visiting Durban, Mr. Gokhale came to Phoenix. He came in a small horse-carriage. The road not being good, he was tired by the time he arrived. Devadas and I sang an English song, "Eternal Spirit", specially memorized for the occasion, and a few verses from Tulasī's † *Ramayana*. Some other songs were also sung.

Gokhale's arithmetic was one of our text-books at the Phoenix school. The book was a translation into Gujarati from the Marathi original. Knowing that he was a scholar of mathematics we were expecting him to test our arithmetic. We had revised our arithmetic lessons as a precaution. He, however, did not give anyone sums to do, but at night asked Devadas a novel question. The question was put like this: "Imagine that you are in a jungle with your

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\* Page 249, Edn. 1950.

† Tulasidas was a great saint-poet of the middle ages. His work *Ramayana* in Hindi is regarded as the greatest book in all devotional literature.

father on one side and your mother on the other. A hungry tiger appears. If you go to the rescue of your father, the tiger would attack your mother. If you try to protect your mother, your father will be in danger. What would you do in this situation?" When Devadas and others were puzzled, Gandhiji suggested the answer. "I would myself go towards the tiger and thereby protect both my father and mother."

### Return Journey

When returning to India, Mr. Gokhale persuaded Gandhiji and Mr. Kallenbach to see him off as far as Zanzibar. It is said that during the voyage the student and the teacher came very close. There were intellectual and knowledgeable discussions. Not only that, Mr. Gokhale even persuaded Gandhiji to play chess. They had many games, both of them doing equally well at it.

Writing about this voyage in *Satyagraha in South Africa*, Gandhiji says :

"....Thus having achieved a conquest of Indian as well as European hearts, Gokhale left South Africa on November 17, 1912. At his wish Mr. Kallenbach and I accompanied him as far as Zanzibar. On the steamer we had arranged to have suitable food for him. On his way back to India he was given an ovation at Delagoa Bay, Inhambane, Zanzibar and other ports.

"On the steamer our talks were confined to India or to the duty we owed to the motherland. Every word of Gokhale glowed with his tender feeling, truthfulness and patriotism. I observed that even in the games which he played on board the steamer Gokhale had a patriotic motive rather than the mere desire to amuse himself, and excellence was his aim there too.

"On the steamer we had ample time to talk to our hearts' content. In these conversations Gokhale prepared me for India. He analysed for me the characters of all the leaders in India and his analysis was so accurate, that I have hardly perceived any difference between Gokhale's estimate and my own personal experience of them.

"There are many sacred reminiscences of mine relating to Gokhale's tour in South Africa which could be set down here. But I must reluctantly check my pen as they are not relevant to a history of the Satyagraha. The parting at Zanzibar was deeply painful to Kallenbach and me, but remembering that the most



intimate relations of mortal men must come to an end at last, we somehow reconciled ourselves, and hoped that Gokhale's prophecy would come true and both of us would be able to go to India in a year's time. But that was not to be." \*

During their return journey, Gandhiji was detained at Delagoa Bay by the Immigration Officer and was given the most humiliating treatment. Gandhiji gave the full report of this unhappy incident in the Gujarati edition of the *Indian Opinion*, dated the 28th Dec., 1912. For this I will draw the reader's attention to Appendix B, where it is reproduced in full.

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\* Page 269, Edn. 1950.

## CHAPTER XII

### MOVE FROM TOLSTOY FARM TO PHOENIX

After seeing Mr. Gokhale off at Zanzibar, Gandhiji returned directly to Johannesburg. At Phoenix there was talk of his going back to India. We were all anxious to know the South African Government's final decision as to when and how they were going to repeal their racial laws. We were all eager to return home.

Jamnadas Kaka made up his mind definitely to return to India, though it was not with a completely happy heart that he could leave Natal. If the Government went back on its decision and Satyagraha had again to be launched he wanted then to be in the fight. He, therefore, decided to leave on the understanding that he would take the first steamer back to Natal if Satyagraha was revived. My father, Magan Kaka, and others, including myself, went to see him off as far as Durban. I shall never forget the incident which took place there at the time.

#### **The Tram Incident**

Jamnadas Kaka had sent his baggage to the steamer in advance. He had to go on board at night since the ship was to leave early next morning. It was almost 9 o'clock when we were on our way to the harbour. We had been walking for half an hour or so when we realized that it would get very late by the time we reached the steamer and it might be difficult for Magan Kaka to go on board. We therefore jumped into a tram.

Durban had double-decker trams. The lower storey and the first three or four rows in the upper storey were all reserved for the whites. Only the back portion in the upper storey could be made use of by coloured people. Since it was late the tram was almost empty. Not with the intention of breaking the law, but seeing the tram empty we occupied the first two rows of the top storey. For about 15 minutes or so we talked and watched the bright lights



of Durban. The conductor thereafter suddenly came up and shouted, "Get up from there and sit at the back." Magan Kaka's reply was, "We shall do nothing of the kind." The conductor stiffened and arrogantly shouted again, "You will have to get up." Magan Kaka was firm. "Whatever happens," he said, "we shall not get up."

The conductor had the tram stopped. The driver also came up. Between the two of them they caught Magan Kaka by the arms and began to drag him off his seat. Magan Kaka was a fairly strongly-built man, but those two whites were really hefty and it was not our rule to answer violence with violence. Magan Kaka, therefore, was single-handed. He caught the handle of the bench tightly but those two were able finally to drag him from his seat. Picking him up, they threw him out of the upper-storey window of the tram. Being agile Magan Kaka saved himself from serious hurt by catching on to the framework of the lower storey of the tram. As for the rest of us, we were pushed down the stairs on to the road.

### **Midnight Vigil**

We saw Jamnadas Kaka off with expressions of hope that we would all be together soon in India. When we reached the tramway, the evening's incident came back to us. If I remember aright, it was Manilal Kaka who was greatly agitated over the incident. He suggested that we should again board the same tram and defy the conductor and show him that we would not be kicked and beaten like animals and take it all lying down. The elders among us agreed with Manilal Kaka and we all waited quite half an hour for the tram but it did not arrive. It was already midnight and we therefore walked back to Seth Rustomji's house where we were staying. Our hearts were still full with the incident, but there was nothing more to be done about it, for it was a matter in which neither the police nor the white-owned newspapers would take any interest.

A somewhat similar incident took place later when the last phase of the Satyagraha was over and the correspondence regarding the Gandhi-Smuts Agreement had

begun. About a dozen of us from Phoenix school were walking to Durban. We reached the tramlines after we had covered 8 out of the 12 miles' distance. Miss Schlesin was chaperoning us. She was an exceptionally courageous, fair-minded and intelligent person. It was because of her that the tram conductor was unable to manhandle us. I remember that Ramdas Kaka was greatly hurt at the insulting manner of the whites and it was with difficulty that Miss Schlesin was able to pacify us.

### **Broom for Gokhale**

In this matter of discrimination between man and man on the basis of birth or colour the tram incidents and a cartoon which appeared in one of the leading white-owned papers of South Africa have remained vividly impressed in my mind. The cartoon showed Mr. Gokhale resplendent in his turban sitting on a big chair politely being offered a broom by way of a bouquet by a white, who was perhaps meant to be the mayor of the town. The caption said, "Before you ask us to wipe out injustice, you must clean your own home of it."

### **Nature Cure**

Before Jamnadas Kaka left for India he had impressed on us all that Gandhiji should be consulted about the treatment of my younger brother Krishnadas who had been ill for some time. He had intermittent fever which had not abated even after a fortnight. The six-year-old boy had been reduced to a mere skeleton. Having seen Gandhiji treating and curing several patients at the Tolstoy Farm, Jamnadas Kaka had told us that Gandhiji would not allow Krishnadas even a drop of milk. The elders at Phoenix could not understand how the child in that condition could be expected to live on nothing. Gandhiji, we knew, was not in favour of calling in any medical aid. In her anxiety my mother persuaded my father to seek Gandhiji's help and he wrote to Gandhiji explaining the whole position. Gandhiji replied immediately by telegram that he himself would be coming to Phoenix.

He was with us within three days of the receipt of the telegram. The very next day, I, too, fell ill. After examining



me Gandhiji declared that I also had intermittent fever which I had caught from my brother. I had caught the infection because I used to sit for hours on my brother's sick bed.

The first thing that Gandhiji did on taking Krishnadas in hand was to stop giving him milk or anything else. All he was given was water with a few drops of fresh lime juice in it every two hours. He was wrapped in a soft sheet soaked in cold water and made to lie in the open once or twice a day. A blanket was wrapped above the sheet. When he could bear the heat no longer he would be brought indoors. His body would then be wiped with a wet towel and his clothes changed. Within three or four days Krishnadas's fever came down and the clouds of anxiety soon cleared. Gandhiji would laugh and joke to cheer Krishnadas. Gandhiji's cheerfulness heartened us all and the atmosphere at Phoenix was filled with joy.

Gandhiji would visit our house thrice a day. He would himself squeeze a lemon into the water and strain it with great care to see that not even a particle of solid matter was left in it. When giving Krishnadas wet sheet pack he would stand by him with watch in hand and keep him amused by asking him all kinds of questions. Gandhiji's treatment was not only naturopathy, but psychopathy, for who could help feeling better when given such patient attention and with such cheerfulness? Krishnadas's fever left him after five days' treatment.

### **Mud Treatment**

I was treated similarly. The day I fell ill a mud pack was tied to my abdomen. It was changed every one or two hours when it dried up. Every morning and evening I was given a Kuhne bath in cold water. My legs below the knees and the upper part of the body were kept covered with a blanket, while the stomach was massaged when under water. The first time Gandhiji put me in a tub for a hip-bath, I was sleepy. He made me so comfortable that I actually slept. In addition, I was given an enema. For the first three days I was given only hot water to drink. On the fourth day a little lime juice in water was allowed. My bed

was kept on a verandah during the day and in a well-ventilated room at night.

Gandhiji gave me his mud and water treatment for ten days, during which he inspected my tongue every day. It was on the eleventh day that he pronounced it clean and promised that he would soon offer me something to eat. I broke my ten-day fast with the carefully strained juice of granadilla.

For days after our fever had gone we were not given milk or any of the other light foods. Gandhiji went on giving us fruit juices during convalescence. Later he gave us bananas to eat. He would peel a banana, cut it into bits, crush it and make a flip of it. While he would be whipping it up, little Krishnadas would get impatient. Gandhiji would go on with his work and would keep Krishnadas engaged in conversation. When the banana was finely whipped, he would squeeze a lime in it and then stir the mixture with a fork. This was to be consumed slowly.

### **Shift to Phoenix**

A few days after my brother and I had recovered I heard to my great delight Gandhiji saying to my father that he intended to shift everybody from the Tolstoy Farm to Phoenix. Had not our illness kept him in Phoenix, he said, he would already have shifted everyone from the Tolstoy Farm. He expected the move to be completed in two or three weeks.

It had been my fond dream to be able to go to the Tolstoy Farm to be near Gandhiji. But within three months of Mr. Gokhale's departure from South Africa, Gandhiji himself came away from the Tolstoy Farm along with all the teachers and students, and Phoenix now became the centre of his activities.

We received Gandhiji and his party from the Tolstoy Farm about a mile away from Phoenix. The sun had set and it was already getting dark when we spotted him striding ahead of the others, looking very cheerful in his white clothes. Those behind him were in small groups. After welcoming them we joined the party.



On the way someone offered Gandhiji a shawl since it was getting chilly. He did not take the shawl, but suggested that I should be given it. I was overwhelmed by his kindness and affection, even though I was chosen because of my recent illness. It was quite late by the time we arrived at Gandhiji's house at Phoenix.

### **The Kitchen House**

The house was now full to capacity. Since arrangements for meals for the new arrivals were made there, it began to be called "the kitchen house" instead of "the big house" as we used to call it even though it was not in fact a very large house. It was just a hut with corrugated iron sheet roofs. It had a large verandah, a couple of rooms, a kitchen and a store-room. It had been originally built by an Englishman for himself. Now that it was so crowded, there was hardly any privacy for Gandhiji or for Kasturba. Not to speak of a room, they had not a corner to themselves. Men and women could not even be given separate wings.

Since nobody among the newcomers from the Tolstoy Farm knew me I watched them without being disturbed. I accompanied them to the spring when they went for a bath and had my meal hurriedly to be able to be near them again. The sliding table in the middle room in Gandhiji's house was now stretched to its full length. On all sides of it sat people from the Farm. There must have been about 30 of them on benches and chairs. They were all concentrating on their food. Gandhiji alone was serving them, going round and round the table.

I was amazed to see that before each of them was only one aluminium plate and a spoon. Everything was served on that plate. I wondered why other utensils had not been brought into use, but I dared not ask anyone.

I was told about the newcomers and their peculiarities by Devadas Kaka after the meal was over. Throughout the day they all kept busy arranging their baggage and furniture brought from the Farm. Gandhiji worked with a hammer and a saw fitting up an open book-stand, and he got it ready by the evening.

### **Call for Discipline**

At night there was a gathering round the main table. After a couple of hymns Gandhiji made a speech. I do not remember his exact words but I clearly recall the severe warning contained in them. In effect he told us all :

“ We have now arrived in Phoenix. This is not Tolstoy Farm and it will be necessary to adjust our behaviour somewhat. The freedom at the Farm to play and roam around must give way to strict discipline. Those who were weak of heart and body have returned to their parents or relations. Those who have come here with me have done so of their own accord knowingly. Here we have to live the hard life of prisoners. Those who cannot stand a prisoner's life are free even now to leave.

“ Only those who have the courage to go to prison when necessary should stay. I do not want those who might weaken on such an occasion whether they are young people or grown-ups, to remain here. That can only be if we practise jail life here and live accordingly.

“ Even if it is not necessary to go to prison and we go to India, then, too, we have to live a life of simplicity and hardships. In India even harder work awaits us. That is why we must follow here rules without which we will not be considered fit to remain in Phoenix.

“ One of the elementary rules, for instance, will be that nobody will be allowed to pluck fruit and eat it whenever he desires. This will not only apply to garden fruits but even to wild fruits. No one must eat any fruit beyond what is served at the three meals, when he can have as much as he wishes. But eating anything else beyond that will be considered theft. The second rule is that everyone must respect and obey the elders.

“ I want you to prepare for this life of discipline and am therefore, giving you one week's holiday. During this time you can do what you like, be lazy, or enjoy yourselves in any other way. But next Monday school will begin. So that you may not say that I give you only work and no play, I am giving you the opportunity to play and then we shall work with all our might.”

### **Some Reminiscences of the Tolstoy Farm**

The boys who had come over to Phoenix were full of stories about the Tolstoy Farm. They found Phoenix strange to begin with. Life at the Farm had been comparatively more comfortable and free. Phoenix meant a life of discipline and austerity. It meant long days of work and saltless food.



Gandhiji had given shelter at the Farm to the families of those Satyagrahis who were in prison. He was father to every child whose father was absent. He was himself the headmaster of the school at the Farm. The school contained Gujarati, Hindi, Tamil and English-speaking children. The students ranged from toddlers to adolescents. There were some girls too. Sometimes Gandhiji had to teach while carrying a child in his arms. In this manner he would give dictation and correct exercise books. The school had classes only for about two hours each day.

### **Walking Trips**

Going on walking trips was a regular activity at the Farm. Johannesburg was 21 miles away. If one left at 2 in the morning one managed to get there by sunrise. Gandhiji and others made several trips to Johannesburg. During one of them, Jamnadas Kaka beat even Mr. Kallenbach and won a prize. He covered the distance of 21 miles in four hours and thirty-five minutes. It was not easy to undertake these early morning trips, for in the winter it was severely cold and frosty. In addition, Gandhiji had urged the Farm-dwellers to give up the wearing of shoes and socks.

Once Mr. Kallenbach decided to attempt breaking the record of Jamnadas Kaka. He started off from the Tolstoy Farm in the usual manner with a knapsack containing snacks tied to his back. But, for fear of having to waste the time on opening it and again re-tying it after taking the food out, he bought snacks at a shop on the way. In the hurry he was in, he did not even wait to take back the change. Mr. Kallenbach succeeded in breaking the record by a few minutes, but Gandhiji took him to task for having wasted money on food when he already had some in his knapsack.

It was usual for Gandhiji to walk the distance of 21 miles from the Farm to his office in about five hours and return home in the evening by train. Gandhiji was once returning home along with a number of boys of the Farm. A white ticket collector asked Gandhiji to have a bag of peanuts which he had with him weighed and to pay freight

on it. Gandhiji told him that the peanuts were being carried for the boys to eat and it was not the rule of the railway to charge freight on foodstuffs meant for the consumption of passengers. But the ticket collector refused to see reason. Gandhiji, thereupon, distributed the peanuts among the boys who started to peel and eat them. That ended the matter.

### **Diet of Fruit**

Peanuts figured prominently in Gandhiji's diet at the Farm. He often had only one meal a day, consisting mainly of fruit. He did not take salt, spices, milk or milk-products, sugar or any cereals. Whatever he ate was mostly uncooked. Peanuts and bananas were the main items. This also used to be his menu at lunch at his office in Johannesburg when he was practising as an attorney.

At the Farm, Gandhiji and Mr. Kallenbach usually had their meals together. Both ate the same things, and after a hard morning's work in the fields meal-time was in a way their rest-time. Gandhiji chewed thoroughly what he ate. The meal naturally took time. It might last for an hour or a little more. Considering that fruit was all that they ate, even this time was not enough. They had often to hurry with their meals to be able to get back to work. Their meal-time was a kind of recess for the school and the boys played about during this period.



## FASTS AS PENANCE FOR OTHERS' LAPSES

The seven days' leave given to us by Gandhiji passed soon enough. The older students spent their mornings washing and cleaning their clothes and bedding and their afternoons sleeping. The younger group roamed about in the gardens and gossiped. Gandhiji alone spent seven very busy days attending to the baggage and furniture that had arrived from the Tolstoy Farm and in making preparations for the new school classes.

### Start of New Life

The seventh day was a Sunday. Without any warning Gandhiji appeared among the group of boys early in the morning while they were bathing leisurely. He was carrying with him a hair-cutting machine. Gently, he called one of the boys to him. The boy was good-looking and his long hair became him. Gandhiji asked him to bend a little. He then cut the boy's hair clean. Then he called the rest of the boys one by one and did the same with each one of them.

Some of the boys looked depressed at the loss of their adornment, but Gandhiji briefly told them, "This is no time for a life of ease. We have to start living our lives on a new basis. Anyone who is not prepared for it is free to leave even now."

It was clear to everyone that long hair had no place in the kind of life Gandhiji intended them to live there.

अुठ जाग सुसाफर भोर भओ ।

अब रैन कहाँ जो सोवत है ॥

(Awake, O traveller, it is no longer night that you sleep.)

This was one of Gandhiji's favourite songs. I do not remember hearing it at Phoenix, but in the Sabarmati Ashram he pressed the inmates to sing and understand it. The habit of early rising was, however, put into practice at Phoenix.

Gandhiji himself usually woke up at 2 or 3 a.m. and would get busy reading or writing. My mother would often wake me up at dawn saying, "Bapuji has been up and

working since 3 a.m. He is now calling Devadas Kaka to get up. You must also get up."

Our house was some 80 yards away from Gandhiji's. He used to sleep out on the verandah and we could hear him in the stillness of the early morning when he called out to Devadas Kaka. I would get up quickly and follow Gandhiji, who went from house to house waking up the other boys. He would spend nearly three-quarters of an hour in this manner, for some of the boys would go off to sleep again, after having been awakened once.

### **Work in the Garden**

When all were up, the boys would get together for washing and then proceed to the garden with pick-axes to dig. Gandhiji would do all this along with the boys. In fact, he usually did more work in the garden than anyone else. If he had to leave for a few minutes to attend to some other business, he would go away saying, "Now carry on with the work. You can gossip and laze in the presence of your elders, but never cheat them behind their back."

Our school at Phoenix may not have been as large and with as many courses of study as other schools, but so far as earnestness and the desire to teach and learn were concerned, it was as good as any.

The school was housed in two huts in the midst of fields. One was a thatched mud hut and the other made of corrugated sheets.

Teachers would come to take their turns. We looked upon them as our elders whom we could question without hesitation. Very often our teachers would come with their feet covered to the ankles with mud and sleeves turned up to their elbows. After giving us our lessons they would return to the fields to work.

The main subjects of study were arithmetic, Gujarati, English, the *Gita* and grammar. Tamil and Hindi-speaking children were taught their own language instead of Gujarati.

### **Headmaster and Cook**

My father was our arithmetic teacher. Magan Kaka and Jekibehn taught us Gujarati, while the *Gita* was



expounded to us by Gandhiji. He was also the headmaster. During the two hours which he had kept aside for the school, Gandhiji spent a good deal of time in the kitchen. He was always concerned about the children, who were 25 to 30 in number. He did not want them to be kept waiting for their meals and was anxious to see that the bread was not burnt or underdone. He, therefore, went to the kitchen himself to lend a hand. In this manner Gandhiji was not only our headmaster but also the chief cook. While doing all this he would also receive visitors from Durban or elsewhere and answer their questions.

As headmaster, Gandhiji had to look into such matters as what should be taught, which of the children should be grouped together, and if any teacher was absent who should take his place. Gandhiji would even know how each of us had fared in the arithmetic class and would good-humouredly tease the boy who had done badly while serving food at common meals. He would give us dictation in Gujarati, correct and mark the exercise books and read and explain the *Gita* in a most interesting manner. While Master Maganbhai Patel made us learn Sanskrit verses, Gandhiji would read to us the paraphrase of the verses of the *Gita* by Maharaj Gatulal (a great teacher of the Vaishnava school).

### Examination Days

On Saturdays we had our examinations. One week it would be Gujarati, the next arithmetic, then the *Gita* and then grammar. Thus every month we were examined in all the subjects. Gandhiji himself examined our answer books and in the evening when we assembled for prayers, he would announce the results. He would at the same time tell us the mistakes we had made.

Gandhiji or Maganbhai Patel would hand over the question papers to us and then go away. I do not remember if anyone invigilated. It did not occur to anyone of us that he should show himself as being cleverer than others. There was, therefore, no question of cheating. Each one of us wrote whatever we knew clearly and with confidence. If we had any shortcomings, if we did not understand something there was no reason for us to be nervous over it, for

each of us knew that Gandhiji would explain everything to us. If we were not successful one month we worked hard and tried to obtain better results the next and looked forward to the examination days.

At the time Gandhiji's method of marking papers often appeared unjust to me. If two boys in one class answered the same question, the one who had done better would sometimes receive less marks than the other boy. In transcription especially, it seemed to me that Gandhiji marked some exercise books with partiality. If we asked him why he had given so few marks to such a good formation of letters he would reply that it was not his aim to compare one boy with another. He was only interested in seeing how far each single boy had progressed and give him marks accordingly.

### **Preparation for Jail**

Our morning school hours were from 9 to 11. For half an hour after that we were made to dig in the fields. We did not like leaving the cool shade of our school to go out in the blazing hot sun. But Gandhiji did not give in. Once a boy gathered the courage to suggest to Gandhiji that instead of making us dig in the fields during the middle of the day, he might let us put in half an hour's extra digging in the morning. Gandhiji's reply was :

"I am not in the least prepared to change the time. You must get into the habit of working in the fields in the heat of the sun. Today you are studying here, but if the struggle starts and you have to go to jail, who will then let you rest in the shade? There you will have to work like brave workers in the hot, scorching sun. If you get tired and give up or lose courage there, it will be a grave insult to you and me. Why do you forget your elders who are working from morning till night? We must give them a hand. If all of you of the school work with them, you will lighten their burden and you will get into the habit of living a sturdy life."

These words of Gandhiji had a great effect on us and we continued our work as before.

### **Non-stop Activity**

Tired out, we would go to our rooms for a bath at about 11-30 a.m. After lunch the elders would go to the



press to do their respective jobs. During this time we were supposed to study on our own. We did, however, take advantage of some of this time to chat. This was also the time for Gandhiji to do his main writing work for the *Indian Opinion*. Even though he used to wake up as early as 3 a.m., he would never think of taking a nap during the afternoon. Neither his mind nor his body seemed to tire. Even out of these few afternoon hours he would try to spare half an hour to teach English to senior students. On days when he could not get away he would inform us by sending us a chit.

At 3 o'clock we would go to the press where we received vocational training. We were taught composing, the younger boys in their own languages and the older ones in English. On the day the Weekly was to come out the students along with the elders worked at folding and packing and doing other necessary jobs to get copies ready for despatch. At 5 p.m. we would again go out to work in the fields. We would go on until after sunset and then turn towards home, hungry and in a playful mood, forgetting the hard long day of work.

Gandhiji never wanted to hurt or punish anyone. If one in error understood and accepted his fault, he would be forgiven. But if anyone of Gandhiji's students or companions ran away from such acceptance, Gandhiji would himself undertake penance on his behalf.

One of the students once found a shilling while on his way to the station and I found a three-penny bit when we were on a walking trip. The boys after some deliberation decided that one of them should take a day off and go to Durban and buy some eatables with the money. One of our teachers was an accomplice in this surreptitious activity. A few days after this Gandhiji went away to Johannesburg.

Three or four days later the teacher — let us call her X — sent for me in the classroom. After making sure that nobody who was likely to tell tales was within hearing, she cautiously opened her table drawer and put a packet before me and another boy saying, "Now quickly eat up your share of the eatables." I dared not, for I had been put

on diet by Gandhiji and if I ate, I felt that even if Gandhiji did not find out himself, I would myself have to tell him about it. X, however, would not hear of my refusing. I, therefore, took my share of the eatables and gave it to the other boy and contented myself with merely the smell of the onions. Only a few days had elapsed since the boys had divided themselves into two groups — one for and the other against our teacher X.

For a few days after Gandhiji's return to Phoenix everything continued as usual. Then one day suddenly the secret was out and investigations began. An atmosphere of apprehension overcame us. We talked in whispers.

Gandhiji spent some time with X, then with one boy and another, questioning them while walking from his house to the press and back. Then he called Devadas and began questioning him while we waited restlessly for the result. A little later we heard that Gandhiji was very angry and that he had slapped somebody. I thought that Devadas had perhaps been slapped, but I wondered why that should be. After all, we were all equally at fault. Then one boy brought the correct news that Gandhiji had not slapped anyone other than himself. He had slapped himself five times. A boy hiding behind some nearby trees had actually seen Gandhiji do it.

It was midday and everyone had gone for a bath. Investigations were, therefore, slowed down until the evening. After the evening prayers everyone looked towards Gandhiji expectantly. After a few minutes' silence Gandhiji spoke the following words softly.

### **Decision to Fast**

“ I had some food this afternoon but I did not have my supper in the evening. Even the water I drank seemed to taste bitter. That a son should deceive his father to such an extent has been causing me deep hurt though I have remained calm. When I could stand it no longer I slapped myself rather than do that to someone else. That, I thought, should show you how much I have been suffering as a result of the incident. Deva has confessed to me his part in the matter and admits to having repented for it. He has also promised never to act in this manner again. But even now I cannot eat, for the boys are keeping



the truth from me. The boys tell one story and X another and it is difficult to say who is telling the truth. Until I can get at the truth my life is less than dust. Therefore unless I can know the truth, it is useless for me to live. After thinking over the matter I have come to the conclusion that I should not touch food and water. Until the boys themselves come to me with the truth I shall neither touch food nor water."

### **Truth Discovered**

Everyone was stunned and there was complete silence. Then Gandhiji spoke again.

"Anyone who pities me should not come to me with the request that I should eat. If I died in the search for truth, what better death could I have? You should celebrate such a day when my body falls for the sake of truth. Therefore, nobody should try to come to me with requests but should rather request the boys and help me to find out the truth."

The next evening, Gandhiji was again to leave for Johannesburg. I followed my father to Gandhiji's house. He was getting ready and with him were our teacher X and Raojibhai.

My father asked Gandhiji, "You must be feeling weak?"

"No, not in the least. The fast in fact begins today," replied Gandhiji.

When it was time to leave, Gandhiji started on foot towards the station. He did not touch even a drop of water though he had to walk over two and a half miles in the hot sun. But when did Gandhiji ever think of his bodily comforts? Discussion continued all the way. Everyone looked very anxious. One or two of the elders along with X walked ahead to talk with her. In this manner we reached the station. Gandhiji took my father, Raojibhai and X aside to talk to them. In the meanwhile the train arrived and Gandhiji boarded it. It was about to leave when my father requested Gandhiji that now that he had got at the truth of the matter, he should have a meal at Seth Rustomji's house before proceeding further.

"Truth is like food to me. I shall fast today and only eat tomorrow. But do write to me and also ask X to do the same," replied Gandhiji.

### Value of Penance

A part of a letter which Gandhiji wrote on reaching Johannesburg is reproduced below. The beginning and end of the letter have not been found but it was probably written jointly to my father and to Magan Kaka :

“What right have I to receive so much love from you ? The consideration you showed me when I was caught up in troubles was unbounded. I pray that you may develop your inner-selves through this affection for me. You should pray that my faith in power of the spirit will grow through this experience.

“If an ordinary pledge, which is the beginning of spiritual struggle, can achieve so much, there can be no limit to what can be achieved through actual penance. If a pledge had not been taken, I would not have been able to experience true affection nor would the truth have come out and the boys proved innocent so soon. Dear X has had to descend from the high place which she had up to now occupied in my mind. Yet, I consider her a good person. And it is our duty to make her better. Her sin was undoubtedly great, but we must not remind her of it. She should be encouraged to take part in household activities. You must see that none of the boys insults her. Do continue the evening programme of religious discourses. The task of waking up the boys in the morning should be continued to be done by Raojibhai. I should be sent news about Maganbhai Patel's health.”

### Self-realization

Fortunately Gandhiji's fast did not last more than a day. But it affected us deeply. That afternoon when we returned to the settlement after seeing Gandhiji off at the Phoenix station we felt sad and disturbed that we should have hurt him so much. Realization of our weaknesses came upon us with even greater force in Gandhiji's absence.

In eight or ten days, however, he returned to Phoenix and, as was usual with us, we went to receive him at the station. When he and Mr. Kallenbach alighted from the train, they both had a grave expression on their faces. Gandhiji was quiet. Almost immediately afterwards we all started to walk towards the settlement. Walking at some distance behind the rest, Gandhiji was talking to Mr. Kallenbach and Y. As soon as we arrived home X, who was also looking unhappy, came to Gandhiji who began talking to



her away from others. I understood that the consequences set in motion by untruth and thieving had not yet come to a close. After the evening prayers Gandhiji spoke thus.

“Perhaps many of you might be aware that from today I have undertaken a seven-day fast. The pledge I have taken this time is not as hard as it was the previous time. This time I have decided not to give up water along with everything else. Even today you will find in our country *sadhus* who can fast for 40 days at a time.

“I do not wish anyone to think that I am undertaking this fast to punish those who have done wrong. I am doing it to strengthen myself. Anyone who takes upon himself the task of showing the right path to others must first himself strive for perfection. I have no such claims. Involved as I have been in worldly matters, I have had no opportunity to live away from the world and practise austerities in order to attain self-realization. It does not appear likely that such an opportunity will be possible in this country. In our own country things are different. Therefore, I should do whatever little I can in the circumstances.

“Work, like breathing and eating, is no more than an everyday routine. If a man wishes to fulfil his real destiny he must strive for self-realization. Why should you be unhappy at this opportunity which enables me to practise austerities? If you are unhappy you will only be making my task more difficult.

“Ba, Ramdas, X, Y and others are all desirous of fasting with me for seven days. But I have forbidden them to do so. Kallenbach considers it his duty to join me in whatever I do. Besides him, I have only permitted Y to go on a fast. Y can only be at peace now if he purifies himself through fasting and repentance. He will, I hope, be able to bear the seven-day fast, but if he dies in the process, it will not be a matter for regret. If someone dies while striving for self-purification what other time could be more opportune for the arrival of death?

“There is no need for Ba, Ramdas or anyone else to undergo a fast. But if they must do so, then, let them wait until my fast is over.

“Because I shall be on fast and will not be able to do my share of work in the fields, the kitchen and at cobbling, others will have to make up for me by doing more than they do now. All of you will have to take greater interest in the discharge of various duties than you do when I am there.

“There is one other point, I have in mind and it is meant especially for the boys. It is wrong to tease or run down those who have committed an error or done wrong.

“Being human we are all liable to err. If anyone of us falls, we should all take it as a warning. If, on the other hand, we laugh at it, we might ourselves commit the same error. It is our duty to be understanding and kind towards one who has committed an error and is repentant.

“This is not the end of my fasting. As soon as my seven-day fast is over, I shall undertake a partial fast for four months when I shall eat only once a day. If these very people fall again, I shall undertake 14 days’ complete fast and one year’s partial one-meal-a-day fast. If I have to undergo a fast for the third time for the same reason, I shall undertake a complete fast for not less than 21 days.”



## FIRST WOMEN SATYAGRAHIS

Gandhiji was greatly influenced by three men whose highest ideals he tried to follow closely in his own life. They were Tolstoy, Ruskin and Rajachandra, a Gujarati saint.

Ruskin's view that the labourer and the lawyer, the doctor and the bricklayer, should receive equal wages was put into actual practice at Phoenix. Everyone there lived the same life. Tolstoy's idea that one should eat only after hard labour every day was instilled even in the children at Phoenix. Fasting, according to Rajachandra's Jain philosophy, was necessary to gain control over the body.

**Hymns and Discourses**

Gandhiji's first seven-day fast appeared to us to be hard. Yet due to the strength of his character it was gone through cheerfully. But during those seven days of fasting the programme of lectures and discourses, etc., that Gandhiji gave us at prayers made a deep impression upon us. On each of those seven days one of Rajachandra's longer hymns was sung in a Gujarati tune. Manilal Kaka would play it on the organ and Magan Kaka would sing it and my mother and other women of the family would join in the chorus. After it had been sung, Gandhiji would explain its meaning. At prayers on the seventh day of fasting, Gandhiji also asked for some other of his favourite hymns to be sung before all of us retired for the night.

The next day Gandhiji broke his fast. Mr. Kallenbach and Y also broke their fasts. Mr. Kallenbach looked greatly reduced due to the fasting, but his face had a peaceful expression. Y also went through the fast with courage and patience.

After breaking his fast, Gandhiji decided to take only one meal a day for the next four months. He did not even wait until he had regained strength. My child mind was unable to grasp the purpose for which these fasts were undertaken. But then, fasting became a common feature in Phoenix. If I remember aright, X, a woman inmate, also undertook a fast and a vow of silence for a few days

after Gandhiji had completed his. Some of the students also undertook fasts for a day or two each. I, too, became keen on going on a fast.

Soon Gandhiji began talking to us about returning home to India. He told us that at the end of the next sitting of the South African Parliament in Cape Town we must return to Mr. Gokhale in India. "We live here in comparative ease," he would tell us, "but once in India I cannot say what hardships we must endure."

Even little things did not escape Gandhiji's attention. I remember his telling us, "I see you waste a good deal of paper and note-books here. But when we go back home you cannot be extravagant. If you do not learn to be economical there, you will become a burden wherever you go. You will have to learn to do without milk and fruit and all the other luxuries you have here. Unlike here, at home you will have to face still greater competition in your studies from intelligent and hard-working boys." In this manner, the idea of going home took root in our minds.

### **Brother's Death**

One day a telegram arrived for Gandhiji that his brother Karsandas had died. The telegram was handed over to him while he was working in the press. Gandhiji quietly glanced at the telegram and putting it in his pocket, went on with his work. At the evening prayer meeting Gandhiji's face had a grave expression. In his hand was perhaps the last letter from Karsandas which he was reading intently. After a while tear-drops fell from his eyes. I was greatly disturbed and Devadas actually began to cry. But Gandhiji soon controlled himself and the prayer meeting was started.

At the end of prayer a couple of Gujarati hymns were sung and then Gandhiji addressed us in the following manner.

"Relationship between people lasts only as long as they have life. Love of the body also lasts as long as life is there. When we have no love for our own physical self after death how can we have nearness with others? Even then we have to accept relationships in the worldly sense.

"Karsandas and I were very fond of each other. Being about the same age we were together most of the time. He was of a



very different temperament. He would be very upset if I did not join him in the things I did not like. Still he was very affectionate to me. Not to fit in with your own brother's wishes is something to be regretted. Unfortunately, I had to feel that regret all the time, for not agreeing with his ideas. I could not help hurting him. I had hoped that on returning to India I would beg for his forgiveness and would thus remove the mental distance between us. But God evidently had willed differently."

At this stage Gandhiji was overwhelmed but soon controlled himself and continued.

"It is wrong that I should be shedding tears. We have no right to indulge in sorrow. Our only duty is to remember the good qualities of those who die. Crying over death is a sin. Why should we consider God's acts to be wrong? Death claims all."

After this Gandhiji engaged himself in the normal routine of the day.

### **Educational Experiment**

After a year of classes Gandhiji found an opportunity to test the students in such a way that in today's language it would be called an organized experiment in post-basic education.

Mr. West's was a small house. For months efforts had been made to improve the amenities there. Gandhiji decided to complete this work in a week. In consultation with everyone it was decided to close the school for a week. Publication of the *Indian Opinion* could not, of course, be suspended. It was, therefore, proposed that all grown-ups should be freed from their duties in the press and their place taken by the boys who should organize themselves to produce that week's issue of the journal.

The boys took up the work with great enthusiasm. They would not accept the help of even the aged Kababhai who was no longer strong enough for hard work in the sun. His assistance was not necessary for work on Mr. West's house, but the boys did not wish to share credit with an elder. He could complete one third of the composing of the Gujarati section of the paper by himself. But even then the boys would not have him. In fact they made Gandhiji promise that no grown-up would interfere with their work, whatever the problems and difficulties they had to face.

### Construction Work

Leaving the press in the hands of the boys, Gandhiji himself took up the carpenter's work. Gandhiji, Magan Kaka, Mr. West and some others had already had some experience of carpentry. The rest were quite ready for hard work. So progress in the construction of Mr. West's house was spectacularly rapid. Gandhiji would be seen in his blue overalls day after day hammering away in the sun like an expert craftsman. The whole of Phoenix echoed with the sound of the tools and the grown-ups' activity made us redouble our own efforts.

The older boys during this period began to whisper that the Satyagraha struggle would soon be started and their departure for India delayed. To make sure that the publication of the *Indian Opinion* would not be interrupted, Gandhiji, they suggested, had planned this test for us. We would perhaps have to carry on the work of publishing the *Indian Opinion* if all the grown-ups went to jail. We were, therefore, keen to come out successful in the test.

We had prepared all the parcels of the paper and got them ready for dispatch in mail-bags before the evening of Friday. When the elders came to see how far we had progressed at about 5 p.m. that day, after finishing their day's work, they found that some of us had already gone out to play and others were getting ready to do so. After examining our work, some of the elders told Gandhiji that the boys had done better than their elders. Gandhiji's encouraging remark was that he had all the time believed that the boys would put the grown-ups in the shade. Normally, the bundles of the paper were dispatched with difficulty by Saturday afternoon. But we carried them to the station early in the morning.

### Plans for Struggle

After this week of brave deeds we resumed our classes but our heart was not in our studies. We were all the time wondering what would happen next. We had high hopes of returning to the motherland but at the same time were enthusiastic about courting jail.



Gandhiji had already told the parents of the boys that anyone who had attained the age of 16 when the Satyagraha struggle began would be expected to go to jail. The idea, therefore, was not very new to the boys. But still Gandhiji gave everyone an opportunity to reconsider.

The Satyagraha struggle was already about seven years old, but it was confined within the boundaries of the Transvaal and no woman had yet taken part in it. Now that the South African Government had declared Indian marriages unlawful and had thus assailed the sentiments of Indians, particularly women, it became necessary for women to join the Satyagraha and go to jail. According to his principles, Gandhiji wanted to start from his own household, but he did not want to embarrass Kasturba by asking her to volunteer. He, therefore, began canvassing the idea among other women. My mother Kashibehn and aunt Santokbehn had thus the good luck to be the first to offer their names. Gandhiji took a pledge from those who volunteered that even if no other women joined the Satyagraha in the whole of South Africa, they would be expected to see the struggle to the end.

### **Kasturba Volunteers**

When Kasturba learnt of it she also decided to join it. She was not very well at the time and was living on a diet of fruit alone. It was obvious that if she had to suffer privations in jail her life itself would be in danger. But in spite of being fully conscious of this danger, she asked Gandhiji to put her name down as the first woman Satyagrahi and he readily agreed to do so. Thus there were four women volunteers ready to join the struggle. Besides Kasturba, my mother and aunt, the fourth volunteer was Jaikunwarbehn, daughter of Dr. Pranjivandas Mehta of Rangoon, a great friend of Gandhiji.

A few days later it became clear that three people from our family would go to jail, namely, my father, mother and aunt. Magan Kaka would stay behind to look after the *Indian Opinion* and the children of the school.

We were not keen to carry on studies and asked Gandhiji that classes might be suspended until the time

the Satyagraha started or we returned to India. But Gandhiji would not hear of it. The school, he said, must carry on some activity even if all the boys went to jail. In practice this plan did not work and even though the classes continued we were all the time discussing plans for the future and the possibilities of a hard Satyagraha struggle.

### Message from Smuts

One day when I went to the station to hand over the *Indian Opinion's* mail to the station master, he gave me a message for Gandhiji. "Tell Mr. Gandhi," he said, "that a 300-word telegram has arrived from Cape Town from General Smuts. It was signalled from Durban, but I was too busy to take it down. The telegram will arrive here by train at five this evening." It was hardly an hour and a half to 5 o'clock. The message had been expected during the last four days. I rushed to the settlement to tell Gandhiji about it. Soon the whole of Phoenix was talking about it.

Gandhiji received the telegram before the evening prayer. In his address at the meeting he said,

"The time for jail-going has arrived. Jail is no play. One has to break stones all day and dig hard, dry ground. The food will not be very good. It would be a great thing if even boiled rice and *dal* served to prisoners were clean. There will be occasions when you will have to fast but even while fasting work will have to be continued. You should be ready to continue working until you fall down unconscious. You still have time to make up your mind. It is better not to join the army to go to jail than to desert the field. Sixteen people in Phoenix have volunteered to court jail. If only 10 out of them went to jail I would be satisfied. But once one has gone to jail there is no turning back even if the struggle were to continue for years."

### No Withdrawals

For minutes after this speech there was complete silence. Gandhiji then began to interrogate individuals. He offered temptations for those who wanted to stay out and made all of us laugh with his light-hearted talk. But not one out of the 16 was prepared to withdraw his or her name. Finally, he challenged the women.

"Returning from prison after one term you will not be able to refuse courting jail again even if you find that your children



have nobody to look after them. God is there to look after the children. He is all-powerful. If He so wills, your children can become sick even while they are with you. And they may, on the other hand, gain many times in your absence. Your love for your children should not make you swerve from the path of duty. Think over it again and again and then decide whether to join the struggle. Do not jump in for the mere excitement of it."

Gandhiji gave detailed instructions about what the Satyagrahis should carry with them. He told them that if they had penknives and watches with them, they would be taken away at the gate of the jail and not returned later. Discussion on the subject continued until midnight.

### **The Last Meal**

It was Monday, September 16, 1913. By daybreak the whole atmosphere of Phoenix had been transformed. Work both in the school and in the fields had been suspended. The group of 16 Satyagrahis was busy preparing for the journey. Others were getting ready to take over the responsibilities of the settlement. Gandhiji was busy working at a table in the kitchen. The absence of Kasturba and my mother was something new. Without them the kitchen appeared to be empty. But Gandhiji did not want the work of the kitchen to be neglected. With the help of Magan Kaka he had already prepared a heap of *chapatis*. The work of kneading flour for leavened bread required strong hands. Devadas was engaged in this task. My responsibility was to cook vegetables. Gandhiji, while busy with his hands was giving detailed answers to those who came to ask him what they would require in jail.

This was our last meal together in Phoenix with the Satyagrahis. By the time the lunch gong was sounded, Gandhiji had prepared a variety of dishes. Besides *chapatis* and spiced vegetables, there was a *chutney* made of tomatoes, a sweet dish made of dates, rice and curry. This was better food than was served in Phoenix even at festivals. Gandhiji himself went round serving dishes.

### **The Conditions**

The train was to leave by 4 p.m. There was still three hours' time for us to leave for the station. The problems

and difficulties Gandhiji had repeatedly mentioned to us became real. The substance of the plan was that

1. The Satyagraha movement would continue until the repressive laws against Indians in South Africa were withdrawn whatever the suffering involved ;

2. Jail-going would continue until the ruinous £3 levy per capita was removed ;

3. We must continue the struggle whether the indentured labourers on whom the burden of this levy fell co-operated or not ;

4. The 16 Satyagrahis would not turn back even if our colleagues and other Indians did not approve of the Satyagraha and did not give it their support ;

5. As long as Phoenix was alive there would be no defeatism. It was with this resolve that the struggle would begin on that day.

Everyone knew these conditions laid down by Gandhiji and the thought of the struggle produced a grimness in the air.

By 2 p.m. bed-rolls were loaded on a cart and sent away to the station. All of us then gathered in the prayer hall and Gandhiji in his quiet serious tone addressed us.

“It is a fight for your honour. Whatever the suffering, you must maintain your present cheerfulness and enthusiasm. Even if you are facing death your zeal must not flag. A three months’ sentence is of no account. That is a period of peace and rest. You will have clothes to wear, beds to sleep on and regular meals. Of course, hard labour will be there. But that should not worry anyone except those who are lazy. Do we not work and toil here ? Actually we work much harder here. If you work honestly and do not idle, no warder will have to keep watch on you.

“I know you are young and will not be able to tolerate what the warders say to you. Your blood will boil but even then I would advise you to have patience and tolerance. That is our penance. We cannot give way to anger. Our spiritual struggle has no place for anger. We must maintain our equanimity and goodness. If you give no offence you will be able to suffer the remarks of warders calmly. I am sure that neither for food nor for anything else will you try to bribe the jail officials. How can people who show weakness over trifles be expected to face even death ?



“What I have said was for the young people. What can I tell the others? Truth is our royal road. We must not stray from this path. There will be storms, but they will clear. Just as happiness cannot last for ever, misery also has its end. The fact is that those who are made unhappy by misery find the period of suffering never ending. If we keep our mind in control and do not stray from the straight path of truth we can be sure of success. It is better not to look too far ahead than be miserable about the distant future. If our steps are firm and true we can cover the journey, however long.

“When you are burdened by difficulties and suffering and have to fast for days on end to secure justice in jail, you may begin to ask yourself why you should suffer for others. Why should you not live the free life that you can have outside jail? The £ 3 levy does not affect us. We do not have to enter the Transvaal. We are happy enough in Natal. These and similar thoughts do not become us even for a minute. According to Narsinh Mehta, good men are those who do not feel proud even when helping others. It is our duty to share others' suffering. Not that we can always remove suffering. Suffering is removed only by God. How then can we be proud if we feel the suffering of others?”

Addressing Kasturba, my mother and other women, Gandhiji said that they should not worry about the children they were leaving behind, for they were in the hands of God. While in jail they should do their duty cheerfully with the assurance that their children would be happy in their absence.

### **The Satyagrahis**

My mother then led in the singing of a hymn followed by 25 or 30 people. But nobody's voice was clear. Everyone was overwhelmed. After the hymns there was silence for several minutes. Soon thereafter the march to the station began. Among those who were not joining the first batch of Satyagrahis were Gandhiji and Magan Kaka. The women in the batch of 16 were Kasturba, my mother Kashibehn, my aunt Santokbehn, and Jaikunwarbehn. Among the men were Parsi Rustomji Seth, a well-known businessman of Durban and a close friend and associate of Gandhiji, my father Chhaganlal Gandhi, Raojibhai Patel, Maganbhai Haribhai Patel, Mr. Solomon and Govindaswami Raju, head jobber of our press. The two young men were

Shivpujan Sahai Badri and Rajugovindu. There were four people below the age of 18. They were Gandhiji's third son Ramdas, Revashankar Ratanshi Sodha, Kuppuswami Mudaliar and Gokuldas Hansraj.

It was proposed to send more batches from Phoenix. But on that day it was felt that this would be the largest group of Satyagrahis in the whole of South Africa and that these 16 would have to shoulder the main responsibility of this third Satyagraha movement there. None of us had any idea that this group was laying the foundation of a great movement of the future.

The adjective "civil" was not used with "disobedience" in South Africa, but Gandhiji had emphasized that the Satyagrahis should do nothing which would in any way hurt the susceptibilities of the white population. He wanted that the Satyagrahis should give such a demonstration of opposition that the Government could not be at rest, but this should be done without the Satyagrahis losing their goodness or politeness. The Government did not want public opinion in India, England or the rest of the world to be roused over the Satyagraha movement. They did feel that their treatment of Indians was not fair or just, but they hoped that their tactics would help them to continue their policy.

### **Government's Attitude**

The Government, therefore, initiated a new move to crush the Satyagrahis' spirit. It was a legal offence for any Indian to cross into the Transvaal or Natal without a permit and if anyone did so, he was liable to be sentenced to three to six months' imprisonment. Now they decided not to arrest Gandhiji, Seth Rustomji and other prominent persons for this offence. They hoped that with the leaders out the spirit of Satyagraha would not grow. The question facing the volunteers from Phoenix was how they would continue their Satyagraha if they were not arrested on entering the Transvaal.

Gandhiji wanted this movement to be really strong. He had given no publicity to the Satyagraha plans and had



informed only a few tried workers of Durban and Johannesburg about it. Except the people at Phoenix hardly three or four people knew how and when the new struggle would begin.

The Satyagrahis from Phoenix were told by Gandhiji not to disclose their identity on entering the Transvaal so that they may be treated like any other Indian settlers. Kasturba was to call herself Kasturbehn instead of Mrs. Gandhi. Seth Parsi Rustomji was to declare himself as Rustom and my father was to call himself Chhaganlal instead of C. K. Gandhi. Ramdas Kaka was not to mention his father's name nor the surname Gandhi. My mother and aunt were not to give their surnames. Of the youngsters, Revashankar Sodha was not to mention his surname, his father, Ratanshi Sodha, being a well-known Satyagrahi of the Transvaal. Thus all the Satyagrahis were to try to keep their identity unknown until they were sentenced.

The Satyagrahis were seen off at the Phoenix station by all of us, including Gandhiji. Two days later Gandhiji gave the news of the departure of Kasturba and others to Manilal who was in Johannesburg. He also was impatient to court jail. The plan was that a group from Johannesburg should reach the border of the Transvaal as soon as the first Satyagrahis were arrested.

## CHAPTER XV

### SPREAD OF THE SATYAGRAHA MOVEMENT

At the prayer meeting on the day when we saw the first batch of Satyagrahis off, Gandhiji explained to us what love of the motherland meant. It was, he said, service of those who were suffering. He went on to ask us if we could enjoy ourselves after sending our nearest relations to suffer in jail. He suggested that we should not only give up sweets but salt also. There were plenty of fruits in Phoenix. Along with fruits we could eat bread. That should be enough.

Gandhiji did not want to force a saltless diet on us, but tried to persuade even very small children to agree to it. He talked to the children and joked with them for quite half an hour that day to make them agree to eating food without salt for six days in a week. The children were not willing to begin with, but when told that they could eat all the spicy dishes they wished to on Sundays, they agreed. Devadas and I also agreed to go without salt whereupon Gandhiji placed before us the proposal that we should get up at 4 every morning. We were hesitant but finally had to agree when Gandhiji pointed out that if we had gone to jail, as we had wanted to, we would have had to face greater privations.

With the departure of the Satyagrahis, one-fourth of the population of Phoenix was left behind. No more than about half-a-dozen of grown-ups remained in the settlement and they were mainly workers in the press who lived in their cottages away from Gandhiji's house. When Gandhiji and Magan Kaka went to the press only children were left at the centre of Phoenix. Gandhiji collected us children in his own house and kept us so busy that we could not think of our imprisoned parents. Since he himself was to leave Phoenix shortly Gandhiji trained us to live a corporate life.



### **Work for Children**

Of the children Devadas was not yet 13. I was under 11 years of age and there were eight others between the ages of three and seven. It was no easy task to look after all of them. Gandhiji did not keep a servant or even a cook. He wanted that we should be able to look after ourselves. The children were divided into two groups, one under Devadas and the other under me. The four children in my care were stronger and less troublesome. Each group had one child who was hardly old enough to speak or walk. Among the tasks given to us were picking vegetables and fruits from the garden, preparing them for cooking, laying the table, washing up, serving the food and sweeping, washing clothes and watering the garden.

It is said that there were many things in Gandhiji which were contradictory. He was full of compassion but would not give anything to a beggar. He was a firm believer in non-violence but would be ready to kill stray dogs and monkeys which ravaged crops. He was unhappy at the thought of any child in a sweeper's house going without education, yet he considered reading or writing of very little importance. There were several other things about Gandhiji which bewildered thinking people. One of them was his encouragement of the spirit of competition. He very much liked swimming and running contests and other manly sports. Whenever he had the time he would organize such contests himself.

### **Spirit of Competition**

Gandhiji was in every way a modest man. The ideal of non-attachment and the principle of selfless action were the very breath of his life. He was completely opposed to making people do things through threats or by offering them temptations. He also believed that children should not be insulted or humiliated in the presence of others and that they should be told everything frankly. But in spite of all this, he fully encouraged the spirit of competition. By creating such an atmosphere he made the children at Phoenix work harder and do things quicker.

He would sit down to eat after we had finished our meals and while he was still eating we would present ourselves before him, having finished washing up. A word of praise or even a smile from him would give us great encouragement. But more than everything else was his cheerfulness which kept us happy and amused.

### **Saintly Woman**

During this period we had the help of a saintly woman, Devibehn. She was known as Miss West at Phoenix, but Gandhiji had given her the name "Devibehn" when she stayed with him at the Tolstoy Farm. She was the elder sister of Mr. West, one of the leading members of the settlement. She never tired of doing things for the children. She would ask us to repeat again and again what we said, so that she could understand our imperfect English. She herself said very little. But if there were any quarrels among children she would listen to them patiently and reconcile them.

As long as the women from Phoenix were away Miss West carried on the work of cooking. She had learnt the Indian way of cooking and could make *chapatis* without any difficulty. After preparing the morning meal she would go to the press where she worked regularly.

Gandhiji had reorganized life at Phoenix in less than a week. Therefore the day we received the news of the conviction of the Satyagrahis we were not depressed and began to discuss Gandhiji's departure from Phoenix.

### **Satyagrahis Jailed**

White officers, we heard, became curious about the 16 Satyagrahis soon after they were made to detrain at the station of Volksrust. They found it strange that all of them should behave in the same way. All of them were individually asked to secure a permit for entry into the Transvaal, but none of them agreed. The police then escorted them across the bridge, but they were back again at the boundary of the Transvaal. The police thereupon arrested them and later produced them in court. My father acted as spokesman and interpreter and pleaded guilty on behalf of them all. He also declared that they did not mean to



offer any defence. The magistrate sentenced them all to three months' rigorous imprisonment.

On arrival in jail, when the officials wanted to take down their names and other particulars, an amusing incident took place. All of them declared Hindi or Gujarati as their mother tongue. Even Jaikunwarbehn who was a graduate and could speak English well refused to speak in any but her own language. My father was again asked to act as an interpreter.

When a jail official wanted my father to ask Kasturba what her name was, he questioned her in Gujarati about how she and other women Satyagrahis had spent the night in jail. Kasturba's answer was that they had gone to bed quietly after prayers as soon as it was dark. To the jail official my father gave the name Kasturbai and when he could not spell it he wrote it down for him.

Jail official : "Is she married ?"

My father to Kasturba : "Did you eat anything at night ?"

Kasturba : "I want fruits. The others barely touched the food that was provided. It was served in very dirty dishes."

My father to the jail official : "She is married and her husband's name is Mohandas Karamchand."

### **Fruits for Kasturba**

All the four women were asked questions about their age, nationality etc., and my father taking advantage of the opportunity, found out how they had fared. He told Kasturba that "Hanumanji" — meaning Mr. Kallenbach — had arrived in Volksrust and was trying to arrange the supply of fruits to her.

The Satyagrahis stayed in Volksrust jail for four or five days, after which they were taken to Maritzburg, the capital of Natal. From Volksrust Mr. Kallenbach was able to give regular news of the Satyagrahis but only scraps of information about them arrived from Maritzburg jail.

The main bit of news received was that the Maritzburg jail authorities refused to supply fruits to Kasturba who, according to her pledge, refused to eat anything else. When

her fast had lasted for three days, the matron who had been speaking to her harshly, melted a little and tried to persuade her to eat whatever was provided in the jail. Kasturba just smiled and kept her pledge.

It was on the fifth day that the authorities relented and began to supply fruits for Kasturba. But the quantity she was given was so small that she was virtually on a fast throughout the three months she was in jail. My mother told us on release that Kasturba was given no more than about half a dozen bananas, a quarter lb. of American dried plums, and four lemons. There were no nuts or anything else. Naturally, she was emaciated by the time she came out of jail.

### **Problem of Dress**

My mother also told us that their main discomfort in jail was with regard to clothes. They were given frocks worn by Zulu women in which they felt embarrassed. For the first few days they also did not like the food served to them but later their hunger had the better of them and they readily ate maize gruel. Sometimes to appease their hunger they even ate up the skins of bananas and lemons given to Kasturba.

Within three weeks of the first group's imprisonment news came that the Satyagrahis of Johannesburg had been greatly encouraged on hearing of Kasturba's imprisonment. Madrasi women in particular had organized themselves in groups and were going about breaking laws. The Government, however, were not arresting women any more. Kasturba's arrest had aroused great enthusiasm in the Transvaal and had also had reactions in the Press in India. Mr. Gokhale had created public opinion all over India in favour of Gandhiji's Satyagraha movement and even in Britain there was criticism of the Botha Government.

### **Other Arrests**

Another bit of news from Johannesburg was that those connected with Phoenix had got themselves arrested at Volksrust. Prominent among them were Manilal, Gandhiji's second son, Pragji Desai and Surendra Medh. This group was also sent to Maritzburg Jail.



One day Magan Kaka told us that my younger uncle, Jamnadas Gandhi, had left Rajkot and proposed to arrive in South Africa by rail from Beira port which he would reach by the first steamer he could get. His plan was to start a Satyagraha centre on the border of Cape Colony.

A few days later we heard that Jamnadas had already started the Satyagraha. He had collected half a dozen people from the Cape Province and the Orange Free State and they were all lodged in the jail at Kimberley, the town known for its diamond mines. Later we heard that Jamnadas and other young men had been taken from Kimberley to a far-off village named Christiana. Many others had also entered the Transvaal without permits and were filling the jails there.

### Days of Silence

Gandhiji was still at Phoenix. He studied the situation while there, carried on correspondence and went on conducting the movement through the *Indian Opinion*. He kept Mr. Gokhale informed about the developments through letters and telegrams but with all this work he did not neglect his little duties in the settlement. He was regular with his manual work and as long as he was in Phoenix he served food to the children himself. He, however, had much less time to talk to the children and keep them amused. Magan Kaka had slowly taken his place where we were concerned. Gandhiji seldom talked even to Magan Kaka. I do not remember that he ever took a vow of silence while in Phoenix, but those days he was silent even without a pledge.

There was no Mahadev Desai \* with Gandhiji to throw light on his mental life, but I feel that at the time he was greatly preoccupied with the Satyagraha movement and was always thinking of how it could be kept clean and pure.

### Faith in Religion

Perhaps it would be best here to quote from the Gujarati article, ‘ सत्याग्रही कोण थडी शके ? ’ (Who can be

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\* Gandhiji's famous private secretary, one of the ablest and closest of Gandhiji's lieutenants.

a Satyagrahi ?) that appeared in the special number of the *Indian Opinion*, 1914.

“Only those who have real faith in religion can be Satyagrahis. If anything is done in the name of religion but is essentially against it, then it is not religion. There can be no defeat for one who leaves everything to God in complete faith. Defeat and victory are the same to him, irrespective of what the people might say. Those alone who have grasped this secret can be said to know it.

The word Satyagraha means the strength of truth. To say that only those who are physically weak or otherwise unable to use physical force resort to the weapon of Satyagraha is meaningless.

A Satyagrahi has to jump into the struggle without fear of death. He must have courage more than physical strength. In short, a Satyagrahi must first and foremost serve the truth and have faith in it.”



## CHAPTER XVI

### STRIKE AND SATYAGRAHA BY INDENTURED WORKERS

When General Smuts, who had conducted negotiations with Gandhiji on behalf of the Government, went back on his word, Gandhiji wrote to Mr. Gokhale about the resumption of the Satyagraha campaign. Mr. Gokhale, being an accomplished politician, could not advise starting of the struggle without finding out the comparative strength of the two sides. He asked Gandhiji to tell him how many people were likely to follow him to the end.

In his book *Satyagraha in South Africa* under chapter "Breach of Pledge," Gandhiji says :

"As far as I can now remember, I sent 65 or 66 names as the highest and 16 as the lowest number, and also informed Gokhale that I would not expect monetary assistance from India for such small numbers. I besought him to have no fears and not to put an undue strain upon his physical resources." \*

#### Maximum Sacrifice

At another place of the same book in the chapter, "When Marriage Is Not A Marriage" Gandhiji writes :

"We now decided to take a step which we had reserved till the last, and which in the event fully answered our expectations. I had contemplated sacrificing all the settlers in Phoenix at a critical period. That was to be my final offering to the God of Truth. The settlers at Phoenix were mostly my close co-workers and relations. The idea was to send all of them to jail with the exception of a few who would be required for the conduct of the *Indian Opinion* and of children below sixteen. This was the maximum of sacrifice open to me in the circumstances. The sixteen stalwarts to whom I had referred in writing to Gokhale were among the pioneers of the Phoenix settlement." †

After the Phoenix Satyagrahis were jailed, Gandhiji sent into the struggle a group of eleven women from the Transvaal who had received training under him at the Tolstoy Farm. Writing about the former, Gandhiji said,

"I knew that the step of sending women to jail was fraught with serious risk. Most of the sisters in Phoenix spoke Gujarati.

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\* P. 272, Edn. 1950.

† P. 278.

They had not had the training or experience of the Transvaal sisters. Moreover, most of them were related to me, and might think of going to jail only on account of my influence with them. If afterwards they flinched at the time of actual trial or could not stand the jail, they might be led to apologize, thus not only giving me a deep shock but also causing serious damage to the movement.” \*

Writing about a group of Transvaal Satyagrahi sisters Gandhiji said,

“We first invited the sisters who had lived on the Tolstoy Farm. I found that they were only too glad to enter the struggle. I gave them an idea of the risks incidental to such participation. I explained to them that they would have to put up with restraints in the matter of food, dress and personal movements. I warned them that they might be given hard work in jail, made to wash clothes and even subjected to insult by the warders. But these sisters were all brave and feared none of these things. One of them was pregnant while six of them had young babies in arms. But one and all were eager to join and I simply could not come in their way. These sisters were with one exception all Tamilians. Here are their names :

1. Mrs. Thambi Naidu, 2. Mrs. N. Pillay, 3. Mrs. K. Murugasa Pillay, 4. Mrs. A. Perumal Naidu, 5. Mrs. P. K. Naidu, 6. Mrs. K. Chinnaswami Pillay, 7. Mrs. N. S. Pillay, 8. Mrs. R. A. Mudalingam, 9. Mrs. Bhawani Dayal, 10. Miss Minachi Pillay, 11. Miss Baikum Murugasa Pillay.” †

This group was led by Mrs. Thambi Naidu. Her husband was a staunch Satyagrahi and was most prominent among Gandhiji's associates in the Transvaal. When a Pathan attacked Gandhiji in Johannesburg it was Thambi Naidu who tried to save him by throwing himself between the assailant and Gandhiji. Mrs. Bhawani Dayal had lived in Phoenix for some months and had been treated by Gandhiji according to naturopathic methods. She was a lean, delicate woman. Her husband, who later came to be known as Sanyasi Bhawani Dayal, was a greatly respected man.

### Call for Strike

The women Satyagrahis entered Natal without permits at several points but were not arrested.

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\* *Satyagraha in South Africa*, p. 279, Edn. 1950.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 277-78.



Finally, under Gandhiji's instructions they approached coal-miners and tried to persuade them to go on strike until the £3 levy was withdrawn.

While the women were not arrested many other Satyagrahis broke the law and were jailed. Gandhiji was satisfied with the progress of the movement.

While planning to strengthen the movement Gandhiji re-organized life at Phoenix and made arrangements to see that the *Indian Opinion* would continue to be run by the small number of workers left behind. It was decided to reduce its size from 16 to 8 pages and to bring it out on Wednesdays instead of Saturdays so as to be able to catch the English mail at Cape Town. Advertisements relating to luxuries and entertainments had been stopped long ago. Now the few advertisements left were also dropped. The first issue which came out on a Wednesday was of only four pages because of shortage of time. Writing in this issue Gandhiji explained that the paper wanted to continue to exist to serve the public by giving the correct news about the condition of Indians in South Africa. If the people did not find it necessary and did not support it, it would be doing no service to the people or the country to continue the paper with the help of any kind of advertisements. The number of pages had been reduced but not at the expense of good reading matter. Only advertisements and other unnecessary matter would be left out.

Gandhiji added that the subscription of the paper was therefore not being reduced and he hoped that Indians would continue to buy the paper and persuade others to subscribe to it.

Another change made was that the machine run by oil was given up and from then on the paper was printed on a press worked by hand.

### **The Satyagraha**

After the successful conclusion of the Satyagraha Movement Gandhiji related this story in Gujarati in a special number of the *Indian Opinion*, 1914. It would perhaps be best to give some portions of that account.

“Great enthusiasm was created in Johannesburg by the imprisonment of the Satyagrahis from Phoenix. The whole family of Mr. Thambi Naidu got ready to go to jail. His wife, her mother and sister, Mrs. P. K. Naidu, and Behn Valliamma, who immortalized herself, and a few other women set out even with children in their arms. Mr. Kallenbach took them to Vereeniging hoping that on their return from the border of the Free State they would be arrested. The hope, however, was not fulfilled. They spent a few days in Vereeniging trying to court arrest by hawking and carrying baskets on their heads.

“If the Government had arrested these women in Vereeniging, perhaps, the strike would not have taken place. In any case it would not have been as successful and on as large a scale as it was. But God was supporting the community. He always defends truth. When the women were not arrested it was decided that they should cross the border of Natal and if they were still not arrested they should start their camp in Newcastle with Mr. Thambi Naidu. They went to Natal but were not arrested on the border. So they settled down in Newcastle in the house of Mr. David Lazarus, whose wife and her sister, Miss Thomas, took upon themselves the task of looking after them.

“It was proposed that the women Satyagrahis should meet indentured workers and their wives in Newcastle and ask the men to strike as a protest against the £3 tax. The plan was that the strike should begin after my arrival in Newcastle. The presence of the women Satyagrahis, however, acted as fuel to fire. These women who had lived sheltered lives addressed indentured workers at public meetings. They were awakened and insisted on going on strike even before my arrival. This was a dangerous step.

“I received Mr. Naidu’s telegram. Mr. Kallenbach went to Newcastle and the strike began. By the time I reached there Indian workers in two coal-mines had already stopped work.

“A committee of Europeans invited me and told me that they would support the movement. After a day’s stay in Johannesburg I reached Newcastle and found great enthusiasm among the people. The authorities could not tolerate the presence of women Satyagrahis there and sent them to jail on a charge of vagrancy.

“Mr. Lazarus’s house now became a centre for Satyagrahis. It became necessary to cook meals for hundreds of indentured workers. The Indians of Newcastle formed a committee under the presidentship of Mr. Seedat and the movement began to make progress. Indian workers in other mines also joined the strike.



### Discussion with Owners

“ Seeing the strike spread, the proprietors of the mines held a meeting. There was a good deal of discussion but no settlement was arrived at. Their proposal was that we should suspend the strike after which they would take up the matter of the £ 3 levy with the Government. The Satyagrahis could not accept this. We had no hostility towards the mine-owners. The strike was not intended to hurt the owners, but to make ourselves undergo suffering. We could not, therefore, accept the proprietors’ demand and after discussions with them I returned to Newcastle.

“ When I reported the result of my meeting with the proprietors, enthusiasm among the workers increased and work stopped in some more mines.

“ So far the workers were continuing to live in the areas where they worked. The action committee in Newcastle felt that as long as they were in their employers’ estates the strike would not be completely effective. They might be tempted or threatened to resume work. It was also not proper for them to live in employers’ houses and eat their food when the workers were not continuing their work.

### Mines Evacuated

“ From the point of view of Satyagraha it was not right that they should stay on near the mines. On the other hand, there was the problem of accommodating and feeding thousands of people. Mr. Lazarus’s house was no longer large enough. But in spite of these difficulties, it was decided that the workers should leave the mines and messages were sent to them asking them to come to Newcastle.

“ As soon as the news spread workers began to evacuate the mines. Every day they began to pour into Newcastle. There were, among them, young men, old men and women, some with children in arms. The women had little bundles on their heads and the men carried boxes containing their belongings. They arrived at all hours of the day and meals had to be arranged for them. But they were an amazingly contented lot. They were satisfied with whatever was given to them. Hardly anyone seemed to be regretful.

### No Luxuries

“ It was impossible to provide shelter for them. They had straw under them for beds and the wide sky as the roof. Some of them asked for cigarettes. I explained to them that they were not mere indentured workers but soldiers in a righteous war. They should, therefore, give up tobacco and similar other luxuries. They accepted this advice and nobody again asked me for money for cigarettes. One of the women on the way gave birth to a

still-born child, but in spite of all the suffering and privations none of the workers talked of going back.

“The Indian population in Newcastle helped by accommodating old men and women in their houses. The whites of the town were not only polite but sympathetic. Nobody worried any Indian. A white woman offered her house for use and some others gave help in little ways.

“But it was not possible to keep thousands of Indians in Newcastle for ever. The town’s mayor was already worried. The normal population of Newcastle was about 3,000. This little township could not accommodate another 5,000 people. The idea of the strike was that people should court arrest. If the authorities wanted they could have arrested the workers. But they had not enough room in jails for so many people. So they did not touch the workers. It was, therefore, decided that the strikers should court arrest by entering the Transvaal without permits. This would relieve the congestion in Newcastle and at the same time provide a test for the strikers.

### **35-mile Trek**

“Agents of the mine-workers were trying to induce workers to break the strike. But none of them was tempted. It was, however, necessary to keep them away from such temptation and the action committee decided to shift the workers to Charlestown, about 35 miles away. Since money for the railway fare for all could not be found, it was proposed that only women who could not walk should go by rail. Others would walk the distance. Since there was the possibility of arrests being made on the way, it was suggested that I should accompany the first party. This consisted of about 500 people, including 60 women.

“I can never forget the sight of this section of strikers marching from Newcastle to Charlestown. The slogans they shouted were ‘Dwarkanath Ki Jai’, ‘Ramachandra Ki Jai’ and ‘Vande Mataram’. They had their food for two days with them and also carried their little baggage as they walked.

### **Rules of Discipline**

“They had been told to keep in mind the following conditions :

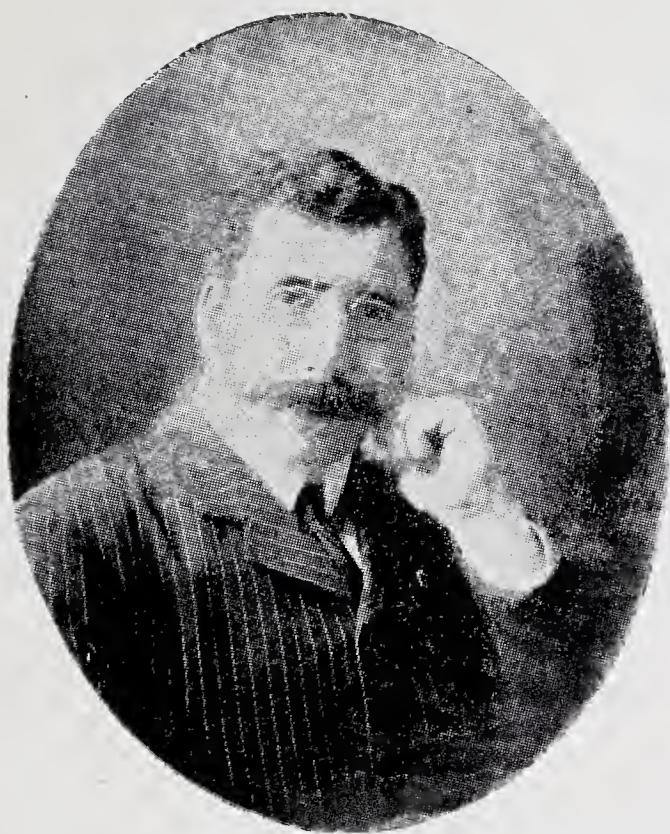
“1. If I was arrested on the way, the whole party would continue the march until they were arrested. Attempts would be made on the way to provide them with meals, but they should not be restless if they had to go without food on any day.

“2. As long as the struggle lasted they would not indulge in drink or similar other intoxicants.

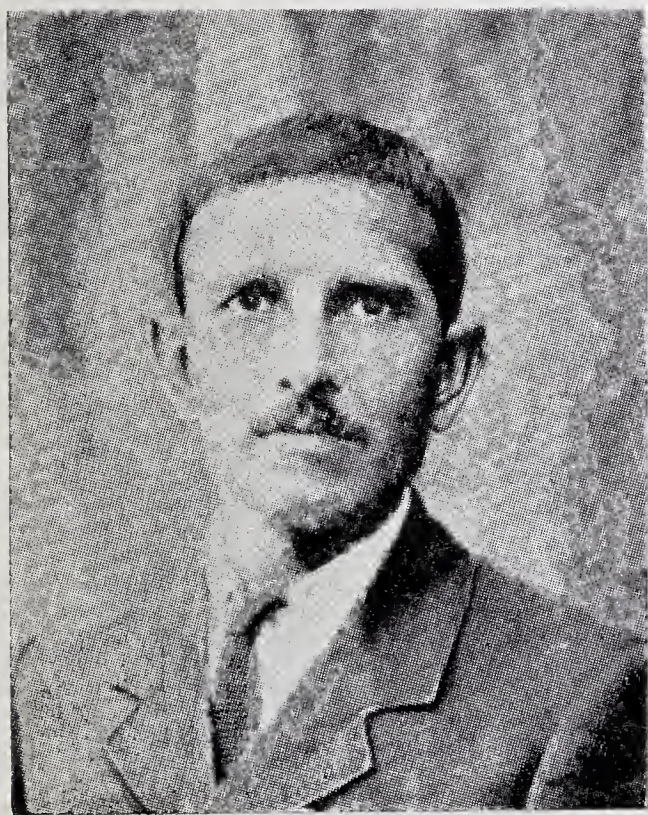
“3. They would not turn back even in the face of death.

“4. At nights during the journey they would be prepared to sleep in the open.





H. Kallenbach



Maganlal K. Gandhi



H. S. L. Polak

The three lieutenants of Gandhiji in  
the South African Satyagraha





“5. They would not damage plants or trees on the way nor would they touch anybody's property.

“6. They would allow themselves to be arrested without resistance.

“7. No effort would be made to fight with the police or others. If they were attacked they should not hit back even in self-defence.

“8. They would suffer the hardships of jail life without any complaint.

“Among the marchers were Hindus, Muslims and people of all castes and provinces. Some Pathans and Sindhis of the North did not like the condition about not hitting back even in self-defence, but they not only accepted the condition but did not defend themselves when the occasion arose.

### **Warrants of Arrest**

“The first night was spent in a jungle. Warrants of arrest were received for about a hundred and fifty people on the way. A single police officer came to arrest them and they made no difficulty. We were then only about six miles from Charlestown. To solve the problem of how the arrested men should be taken away I suggested to the police officer that he should let them march with me up to Charlestown where he could take them into his custody. Otherwise he should consult his higher authorities and do as instructed. Agreeing with me the officer went back.

“A little later we arrived in Charlestown, a small place with a population of about 1,000. There was only one main road in the town and the Indian population was very small. The whites were surprised to see so many Indians entering the town. The train to carry the arrested men to Newcastle was not ready. The question, therefore, arose where they should be kept. The local police-station could hardly accommodate so many people. The police, therefore, put them in my charge and agreed to pay their food bill. This was a great compliment to Satyagraha. Normally, arrested people would not be handed back to us. We could not be responsible for anyone who escaped. But the authorities had realized that the Satyagrahis themselves wished to be arrested. So the arrested people stayed with us for four days and readily submitted themselves to the police when they came to take them away.

### **Whites' Help**

“Satyagrahis now began to pour into Charlestown in groups of a few hundreds each. The Indian merchants of Charlestown provided accommodation in their houses. The local corporation also made some accommodation available. The whites were helpful.

A doctor named Briscoe took upon himself the task of providing free medical treatment and when we left Charlestown he gave us expensive medicines and some essential surgical instruments without charging anything for them.

"The food was cooked in a mosque and fire had to be kept burning all the twenty-four hours. The meals were prepared by some volunteers from among the strikers. During the last days, between four and five thousand people had to be fed. But the volunteers never tired of work. In the mornings maize porridge was served to all with maize *chapatis*. The evening meal consisted of rice, *dal* and a vegetable. In South Africa everyone was used to three meals a day. But the strikers were satisfied with only two plain meals during the struggle.

"A new problem that arose was of keeping so many people in Charlestown very long. Besides the danger of epidemics, it was not proper to keep men used to hard work idle for any period. They were all poor people, but there was not a single theft in the town nor were the police ever called upon to do very much.

"Since it was not advisable to stay on in Charlestown, it was decided to enter the Transvaal and if no arrests were made, to march on to the Tolstoy Farm. Before starting out we informed the Government that we were going to enter the Transvaal to court arrest. We did not want to stay there but if we were not arrested we would reach the Tolstoy Farm and camp there. If the Government abolished the £3 levy, we would be ready to march back.

"The Government were not inclined to pay any attention to this notice. Their agents were trying to make them believe that the strikers would tire themselves out and end the movement. The Government, therefore, distributed challenges to the strikers printed in various languages.

### Peaceful Procession

"On November 6, (1913) 3,000 people marched out of Charlestown early in the morning. The procession was a mile long. Mr. Kallenbach and I were in the rear. The police were present at the border when the strikers arrived there. We had a word with the police but when they refused to arrest us, the procession passed through Volksrust in a peaceful and disciplined manner. We halted at Standerton Road outside the city. We had a meal there and decided that women should not join the march, but there was so much enthusiasm among them that some of them remained with us. Some women and children had stayed behind in Charlestown. I sent back Mr. Kallenbach to look after them.

"The next day near Palmford I was arrested, on a charge of leading people into the Transvaal without permits. They had no orders to arrest others."



## CHAPTER XVII

### SATYAGRAHIS' DISCIPLINE AFTER THE ARREST OF LEADERS

Hearing of the miners' strike and of how Gandhiji was spending all his time and energy in it, all of us at Phoenix, especially Magan Kaka, became very worried. Those who had been to Newcastle to take instructions from Gandhiji said that he had lost a good deal of weight and was now a bundle of bones.

It has already been related how Gandhiji took a vow to fast for seven days and to have only one meal a day for four months. This meal consisted only of fruits. Working among the strikers he had given up even essential parts of his diet like nuts and fresh grapes. We were all, therefore, hoping that he would be arrested before his health was further strained.

During the strike Gandhiji was up and ready by four in the morning, when he would start work for the cooking of meals for the strikers the serving of which commenced at daybreak and continued right up to ten at night. Gandhiji himself served the food to row after row of strikers as they moved in a queue. While serving the food Gandhiji would have a word of cheer for each of them. He hardly rested during the day and even after serving the food late at night would move among the strikers to make sure that all the arrangements for old men, women and children were properly made. He would rest for a few hours at night sleeping on the bare ground along with the strikers. He was up long before daybreak and before starting other work made sure that the area where the strikers were camping was kept in a sanitary condition.

Let me now resume the account of the Satyagraha by Gandhiji from the point I left over in the previous chapter.

“From Volksrust I made the following telegram to the Government.

““I am glad that the Government have arrested the leading sponsor of the Satyagraha struggle; but I cannot help saying that

the time they have chosen is critical and full of danger. The Government are perhaps aware that 122 women and 50 children have been taking part in the march. Until they return to their homes they are subsisting on very little food. They have no shelter and no protection. It will be extremely harmful to separate me from them in this situation.

### Government Warned

“ ‘ When I was arrested last night I left my companions without even speaking to them. Hearing of my arrest, they may be greatly enraged. I, therefore, request the Government either to allow me to remain with them during the march or to send all of them by train to Tolstoy Farm and make arrangements to feed them. To remove from among them one in whom they have faith without making any arrangements for their food is in no way proper. I hope that the Government will change their decision upon reconsideration. If there is any untoward incident during the march and if any woman with a child dies the responsibility will rest with the Government.’ ”

“ I was produced before a judge in Volksrust. I did not have to put up any defence. But I wanted to make arrangements for those strikers who had gone beyond Palmford and those who were still in Charlestown. I, therefore, asked for time. The Government's counsel argued against it, but the judge ruled that bail could be refused only in murder cases. He, therefore, asked for bail of £50 and gave me a week's time.

“ On being released I immediately went and joined the marchers who were greatly heartened. Meanwhile, a telegram arrived from Pretoria saying that the Government intended to arrest only the leaders and not to touch the others. It did not mean that the others would be free to do what they liked. The Government did not want to make our task easy by arresting all of us nor did they wish to excite public opinion in India.

“ Mr. Kallenbach was following us with a large batch.

“ When our batch of 2,000 arrived at Standerton I was again arrested and the date was fixed for the hearing of my case. We went further, but the Government could not tolerate all this. So they decided to separate me from the rest immediately. Preparations were being made at that time to send Mr. Polak with a deputation to India. Before leaving he came to see me. Our work remained unfinished and on Sunday I was arrested a third time near Greylingstad. The warrant this time had been issued at Dundee and the charge against me was of inciting indentured workers to go on strike.

“ I was removed from there in great secrecy to Dundee. Since Mr. Polak was with us in the march he took charge of the



movement. On Tuesday I was tried in Dundee. All the three charges against me were read. With the court's permission I made the following statement:

### **Struggle Justified**

“‘For my own sake and for the sake of justice for the entire population I must declare that I take the entire responsibility of the charges made against me. I do so as a lawyer and as an old resident of Natal. The aim in taking these people out of the Natal colony was good. We have no quarrel with the mine-owners. I regret that our struggle should have caused serious loss to them. I would plead with the employers of Indian workers that the £3 levy is a great burden on my countrymen and should, therefore, be abolished.

“‘After the controversy between Mr. Gokhale and General Smuts, it was my duty to start a struggle which would attract wide attention. I am not unmindful of the sufferings of women and children, but I believe it was my duty to advise them and I have performed that duty. I shall continue to consider it my duty to advise my countrymen to strike and even to live by begging as long as this law is not abolished. I am convinced that without facing hardships and suffering they cannot free themselves from oppression.’

“I settled down in jail. In the case in Volksrust three months' imprisonment was added to the nine months' sentence awarded to me at Dundee. Meanwhile, I heard that Mr. Polak had been arrested and instead of going to India he had been put in jail. I was happy about it. To my mind this was a better deputation than the one he would have led to India. Mr. Kallenbach was arrested soon thereafter and, like Mr. Polak, he was also sentenced to three months' imprisonment.

“The Government made a mistake in believing that the people would give in after the arrest of the leaders. The strikers were put in about four trains and carried back to the mines in Dundee and Newcastle. They were made to suffer great hardships. But they had come out prepared to suffer. They were all leaders. They were expected to show their strength even without the so-called leaders and they did so.”

Magan Kaka gave us children the news of Gandhiji's arrest at Volksrust. After that the news that came in was confusing. One day Magan Kaka received a letter from Gandhiji which in substance was as follows:

“I was tried today. There was sufficient scope to get a release but how can a Satyagrahi want to be released? I did not say a word in my defence and took the entire blame on

myself. Local businessmen are prepared to bail me out. I can be free for a definite period on bail, but then it is not necessary. It would be a conceit on my part to believe that the struggle can be conducted properly only when I am out of jail. There is God's protecting hand over us and He will carry us through."

### **"Free" in Jail**

Another letter came from Gandhiji which was written in Dundee jail. It said :

"I have been sentenced to nine months' imprisonment. If at the two other places, the sentence is six months' each, it will all add up to 21 months and I shall consider myself a very lucky man. It is for the first time today that I feel a little free since the beginning of the strike.

"Jail going has become something easy for us. But still, I felt that I should not hesitate in going to jail...."

A few days later we heard that Gandhiji, Mr. Polak and Mr. Kallenbach had been removed to some unknown place from Volksrust jail. Magan Kaka wrote to Indian merchants in various places where they were likely to have been removed. We knew they would not be kept together and the only information we could get to begin with was that Gandhiji was neither in the Transvaal nor in Natal. Later, we found out that Gandhiji had been taken to the jail in Bloemfontein — the capital of the neighbouring province of the Orange Free State. Mr. Kallenbach had been removed to Pretoria and Mr. Polak to Diepkloof.

Gandhiji's was simple imprisonment and the authorities made no difficulty in supplying him a fruit diet. He was being given a dozen bananas, four tomatoes, two spoons of olive oil and groundnuts. Seeing his weak condition the jail doctor suggested his taking milk and butter but Gandhiji did not agree. At the insistence of the doctor he, however, agreed to take walnuts and almonds. He was comfortable in jail and was provided with books which he had asked for. In spite of the fact that his imprisonment was simple he asked the authorities to give him work to do.

### **Repressive Measures**

All kinds of reports were received in Phoenix about the struggle. We heard that on their failure to persuade workers to go back to the mines, the owners resorted to



repressive measures. The strong among them were flogged and even some of the women were roughly handled. Their leaders were locked up in solitary confinement. The workers, however, were not intimidated and the strike continued to spread.

When the owners were faced with the possibility of the water pumps which cleared water from the mines being stopped, they were greatly upset. The danger was that if the water was not pumped out the mines might be inundated. To ward off this danger mine-owners requisitioned the services of the Zulus of Natal. Not being used to steady manual work, the Zulus did not prove very successful. This led to further repression against the strikers which in turn made the strike spread wider. Actually the movement came right up to Phoenix.

### **Strike Spreads**

There were a number of cane crushing mills around Phoenix. Indentured workers from these mills began to pour into Phoenix. They only knew that this was Gandhiji's home. Hundreds of them came there. On being asked why they had struck, their answer was that since the Government had imprisoned their "King" as well as their "Queen" and their children how could they continue to work? There were over 50,000 Indian workers slaving for the whites in Natal.

The strike around Phoenix had started without anybody working for it. It would not have even been easy for anyone to go around propagating the idea. Sugarcane fields extended up to about 50 miles to the north of Durban. The centres of sugar mills were also from 10 to 40 miles away from Phoenix. The workers, however, had heard of this struggle for justice and had voluntarily joined it. This had happened even though there was no organization to run the struggle, no leaders to direct it and no machinery to give the developments any publicity, particularly after Gandhiji had been jailed.

Mr. Raojibhai, in his Gujarati book *Gandhijini Sadhana*, has given a graphic account of how indentured workers from various places in and around Durban

offered themselves for arrest and insisted on being sent to jail. He has also quoted the eye-witness account of an educated African, Mr. John Dube, of how a crowd of 500 Indian workers showed its firmness and discipline in the face of atrocities committed by the police. They were attacked with canes and lathis, with the butts of rifles, and then mounted police charged to disperse them. One of them, who was declared to be their leader, was beaten up and then attacked with a spear by an African policeman. When this created some excitement the police fired on the crowd, killing two and injuring many others, among whom were women and children.

After the arrest and imprisonment of Gandhiji and others, the responsibility for conducting the struggle rested, among others, on Maganlal Gandhi, Miss Schlesin and Mr. West. Maganlal Gandhi was perhaps living a harder life out of jail than he would have done inside it. He was the only Indian in Phoenix who had to study the strike situation and direct the movement through his writings in the *Indian Opinion*. He had to keep himself calm even in the face of all the repression and atrocities committed against Indians. There was nobody he could consult or discuss things with. He had to look after both the writing and printing of the Weekly in addition to paying attention to the living and education of the children at Phoenix. On top of it all came the responsibility of receiving and dealing with hundreds of strikers who visited the settlement.

### **Strenuous Routine**

Maganlal Gandhi was a strong, well-set man, but with overwork he began to lose his strength. At that time nobody knew how long the struggle would last. Three months later, when those imprisoned returned to Phoenix they found Magan Kaka had thinned as much as, if not more than, Gandhiji and Kasturba. During this period of hard work his temper also mellowed and he was more calm and cheerful.

Magan Kaka would get up at 2 or 2-30 a.m. to write articles for the *Indian Opinion*. By 8 or 8-30 he would get



ready to go to the press without any breakfast. He helped in composing, read proofs and dealt with the big mail that arrived every day. It was with difficulty that he could snatch about three quarters of an hour for his meal. He spent about an hour digging in the fields in the evening and continued working in the press until nine. After that he started writing and never retired before 11 or 11-30 at night.

Phoenix was a healthy place but perhaps to try Magan Kaka further, five or six children were laid up with malaria and later on Magan Kaka himself had it. During the children's illness Magan Kaka nursed them with great care and affection.

### **Tribute to Settlers**

In his book *Satyagraha in South Africa*, Gandhiji has written :

"Like Newcastle in the mine area, Phoenix now became the centre of the strikers on the north coast, and was visited by hundreds of them who came there to seek advice as well as shelter. It therefore naturally attracted the attention of the Government, and the angry looks of the Europeans thereabout. It became somewhat risky to live in Phoenix, and yet even children there accomplished dangerous tasks with courage." \*

Gandhiji paid a tribute to the workers of Phoenix in his account of Satyagraha movement in a special number of the *Indian Opinion*, 1914.

### **Miss Sonja Schlesin**

About three weeks after Gandhiji's imprisonment a white girl came to see Magan Kaka. She had bobbed hair and was wearing a white blouse and a black shirt. She was an impressive figure. This was Miss Schlesin about whom all of us had heard so much. She had worked with Gandhiji as his steno-typist and secretary and in his book *Satyagraha in South Africa* he has written at length about her work and ability.

From her conversation with Magan Kaka we learnt that she had been with Gandhiji when he started the march from Charlestown and had stayed with him right up to the end. She had remained with the strikers until

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\* P. 320, Edn. 1950.

all of them were arrested and had now come to Phoenix according to instructions from Gandhiji.

### **Imam Saheb's Daughter**

Another girl who came with Miss Schlesin was introduced as Fatima, the eldest daughter of Imam Abdul Qadir Bawazir. Miss Schlesin said that Fatima's father had gone to jail and she had therefore been sent to Phoenix by Gandhiji. She added that she was very good at household work and needlework and would study with the others in Phoenix.

Ten-year-old Fatima was in veil when she arrived but within a few days she became one with the other children. She looked very much like a white girl and spoke English very well. She knew a little Hindi, but talked in Dutch with her parents. She would sometimes sing to us pretty Dutch songs. Whenever there was an opportunity, Fatima would talk about her father. With his own efforts, she would tell us, he had become as rich as a nawab. He owned cabs and his business was purchasing and selling horses. He had lost a good deal in business when he went to jail for the first time, but he had gone to jail again against the advice of Gandhiji and his own friends. He had wound up his business and proposed to live in Phoenix on release from jail.

### **Faith in God**

In 1932 when Gandhiji was in Yeravda jail he used to write a weekly letter to the children of the Sabarmati Ashram. In three of his letters he gave his reminiscences of Imam Abdul Qadir Bawazir who was by then dead. Mentioning the Imam Saheb's life at Phoenix, Gandhiji wrote,

“When the Imam Saheb told me that he would come and stay in Phoenix I was wonderstruck. How could a man who had never worked with his own hands and had lived a princely life turn a labourer all at once? Even if the Imam Saheb himself could put up with the life at Phoenix, what would happen to his wife Haji Sahiba and their daughters Fatima and Amina? To all this the Imam Saheb had a simple answer. ‘I have put my faith in God. You do not know Haji Sahiba. She will, of course, be ready to live where I live. She will also be ready to share



whatever is my life. I have, therefore, decided to go to Phoenix. Nobody can say when this Satyagraha struggle will end. But I can no longer return to my old business or any other. Like you, I have realized that a Satyagrahi should give up love for money and wealth.'

"When the Imam Saheb began to take part in the activities at Phoenix he was in delicate health. But early morning he would be at the spring and would be seen carrying water up a slope of 50 feet, slowly making his way to the top. Whenever the printing machine in the press stopped the Imam Saheb would be ready to give a hand in turning the wheel. Even at his ripe age he learnt composing and thus became a part of the life of Phoenix. He and his family were used to eating meat every day. But I do not remember if they ever cooked meat in Phoenix. The whole family were regular with their daily prayers and with annual fasting during the Ramzan.

"Day by day the Imam Saheb was making progress towards purity of life. His faith in God was being strengthened and he was accepting all the discipline of the Ashram."

This letter was dated March 21, 1932.

### **Fakirabhai**

Another well-known person who came to Phoenix during the time when Miss Schlesin came there was Fakirabhai. I believe he was from Surat district and was a full-fledged Gujarati peasant. He was an example of the peace-loving simple peasantry of Gujarat.

Before he came to Phoenix Fakirabhai had been to jail eleven times. He had courted jail again and again by hawking fruits and vegetables in Johannesburg without a permit. He was thus among the very first to have courted jail. Now he had been asked to come to Phoenix to help the workers instead of going to jail once again.

At times Fakirabhai would sit for hours just talking, but he had a very great capacity for hard work. In Phoenix he was allotted the work of distributing food rations to strikers. For 12 or sometimes 15 hours at a time he would sit and weigh the rations without being ruffled in any way. He sometimes distributed rations to nearly 1,000 people in a single day.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### SATYAGRAHIS' HUNGER-STRIKE IN JAIL

Of the Durban and Maritzburg jails, the one at Durban had the worse reputation. African prisoners sentenced for murder were kept there. When the Satyagraha struggle was at its height and the jails were filling up, selected prisoners were sent from Maritzburg to Durban.

In the previous two Satyagraha movements in the Transvaal the whites' pockets were not affected, but this time the capitalists of Natal were suffering financial losses and being in sympathy with them the Government were greatly disturbed.

The jail superintendent in South Africa was known as Governor. The one in Durban jail was a particularly hard-hearted man. He had, it appeared, taken a vow to curb the enthusiasm of Indian prisoners.

#### **Prisoners' Complaints**

Meat was served to non-vegetarians twice a week in South African jails. Indian Satyagrahis who did not eat meat made the Transvaal authorities agree to supplying them with one-eighth of a pound of *ghee* twice a week instead of meat. But the Natal Government did not accept what the Transvaal authorities had agreed to. When the jail officials paid no attention to the Satyagrahis' demand those of them closely associated with Gandhiji decided to go on hunger-strike on this issue. Other Satyagrahis also joined them in large numbers. The main demand was *ghee*. But they had other complaints also. They wanted to protest against lice-infested blankets, unwashed utensils which had been used by meat-eaters, the warders' harsh language and abuses and, finally, the rule which allowed them to have a bath only once a week.

Among those on hunger-strike were two of Gandhiji's sons, Manilal and Ramdas. For three or four days the prisoners waited for a settlement, but when they found the situation taking a serious turn they became uneasy.



### Talk with Magistrate

Meanwhile, a dialogue between Shri Revashankar Sodha and the magistrate was received for publication in the *Indian Opinion*. As far as I remember, the conversation went something like this.

Magistrate : What is this mischief you are creating ? Why don't you eat ?

Sodha : We are not creating any mischief deliberately. We want *ghee*. If you arrange for us to be supplied with *ghee* we shall end the hunger-strike.

Magistrate : You will not get *ghee*. Don't you realize that you are in jail and cannot ask for whatever you like ?

Sodha : If you cannot give us *ghee*, we cannot give up our hunger-strike.

Magistrate : If you do not get *ghee* how long will you continue the hunger-strike ?

Sodha : Until we die.

Magistrate : Well, if you die there is no shortage of land to bury you.

Sodha : As long as you do not give us *ghee*, there will be no shortage of those ready to die.

Revashankar Sodha and Ramdas were the youngest among the Satyagrahis in jail. The authorities tried their best to wean them away from the hunger-strikers, but Revashankar gave them such sharp answers that they were left helpless. Ramdas made their efforts equally fruitless with his simplicity, politeness and firmness. He would follow all the jail rules meticulously. Everyone was impressed by him. He would work steadily when he was asked to and the warders never had to speak to him about it. Others might rest a while when digging, but not Ramdas. When others picked carrots or radish from the jail garden, Ramdas would refuse to touch them. In his cell he would sit quietly reading and was careful not to inconvenience anybody.

### Humiliating Search

Many of those who took part in the hunger-strike dropped out. Among those who stuck on and fell unconscious while digging in the garden were Revashankar and

Maganbhai Patel. Ramdas, however, was able to stand up to the last.

According to those who were in jail, the hunger-strikers were taken regularly to the garden for digging and in the evenings before being locked up were thoroughly searched. They were made to undress completely and stand up in a line to wait until the warder had completed the search. To make sure that they had concealed nothing on their persons they were asked to jump, spread their hands or open their mouths. This was done in order to humiliate them. To avoid fainting while at work the hunger-strikers utilized the one and a half hours allowed for lunch to rest or sleep.

After Revashankar had fainted while working in the hot sun, the jail authorities reduced the severity of the labour. Revashankar was taken to the jail hospital and some milk was forced into his mouth, but he deliberately vomited it out. They fed him again using a rubber tube after which he could do nothing.

An African warder meantime beat and badly man-handled Pragjibhai Desai. He was dragged by one of his legs. Others were equally badly treated. But these trained Satyagrahis remained steadfast and after a week's hunger-strike the Government agreed to supply them with *ghee* and also to redress their other grievances.

### **Arrival of Strikers**

Early one morning I was suddenly awakened by noise and bustle in the neighbourhood. Coming out I found that the whole of Phoenix was full of strikers. Magan Kaka told us that they had been arriving in large numbers throughout the night and more were expected to come.

All of us were deputed to various duties. We had to distribute food rations to the strikers' families and to see that the place was kept sanitary. These people, however, were very disciplined and were no trouble to manage. Many of them had walked long distances without food, but they never complained.

Our main difficulty as the number of strikers increased to many hundreds was the supply of food to so many of



them. We regularly received food grains from the Phoenix station but these supplies were not large enough to cope with the growing demand.

Before he was arrested Gandhiji, however, had issued an appeal to all Indian residents in South Africa to help the strikers, and one could now see how generous was the response to it. While we were worrying about food supplies we heard of a mass meeting held in Durban after which Indian merchants of that town as well as of Maritzburg had offered large quantities of food grains. The news of the strike, it was said, had reached India also and that Mr. Gokhale had sent a telegram saying that he would arrange to supply food grains.

### **Youth's Bravery**

Three or four days later a mule train laden with food grains arrived from Durban. Among others accompanying this caravan was Sorabji, younger son of Seth Rustomji. He unloaded a number of bags at Phoenix and then led the mule train on to other places where strikers had gathered after leaving the mines.

At that time I did not know how brave Sorabji was. Writing about him in his *Satyagraha in South Africa* Gandhiji says,

“One incident deserves to be placed on record. Many labourers came out in Verulam and would not return in spite of all the efforts of the authorities. General Lukin was present on the scene with his soldiers and was about to order his men to open fire. Brave Sorabji, son of the late Parsi Rustomji, then hardly 18 years of age, had reached here from Durban. He seized the reins of the General's horse and exclaimed, ‘You must not order firing. I undertake to induce my people peacefully to return to work.’ General Lukin was charmed with the young man's courage and gave him time to try his method of love. Sorabji reasoned with the labourers who came round and returned to their work. Thus a number of murders were prevented by the presence of mind, valour and loving kindness of one young man.” \*

### **Sick Man Flogged**

One day, while I was busy sticking stamps on the outgoing mail, one of the boys came running to me to tell me

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\* Pp. 316-317, Edn. 1950.

that there was a man near the house who could hardly walk. His wife accompanying him was helping him to move along. When Magan Kaka heard about it he went out to meet him. The man gave his name as Surjhai and showed Magan Kaka his back which bore ugly marks of lashes. He explained that a white man had flogged him with a whip. He would have been flogged even more had not some others intervened. He did not say very much more except to remark that he did not mind the beating, but why had that white man picked out a sick person like him ?

While Surjhai was calm, his wife was getting more and more upset. Tearfully she told us that her husband had done no wrong. He had not shown any resistance. He had not been able to go to work for three or four days owing to illness and for that alone he had been victimized. He would have escaped the flogging had he been in a position to run away.

#### **Suffered in Silence.**

Magan Kaka tried to console them and then brought them to our school building. The boys looked after them and they stayed on even after the other strikers had left. After the end of the struggle his case was among the major topics of discussion. I do not know how the planters defended themselves against the charge of causing his death for Surjhai did not recover following the flogging. While at Phoenix he suffered silently and thus left behind an example of courage and fortitude.

As more and more strikers collected at Phoenix, we began to discuss the possibility of Magan Kaka, Mr. West and Devibehn also being arrested. Often we saw policemen outside Phoenix, but for days there was no incident. One day I saw a number of mounted soldiers riding towards the press. On nearing the building one of the men who was leading them saw me there and asked me where Mr. Gandhi was. When I told them that Mr. Gandhi was in jail he said he wanted to meet Mr. Maganlal Gandhi and asked me to tell him that a Lieutenant had come to see him.



### Officer's Threat

When Magan Kaka met them they asked him to tell the strikers to return to their places of work and not to keep them there or feed them. Magan Kaka replied that it was their duty to allow whoever came there to stay in the settlement and to make arrangements for their food. The Lieutenant said that if the strikers did not return to work before a particular time they would be very harshly treated. Magan Kaka's straight answer was that he could not advise them to go back. The Lieutenant thereupon suggested that to prevent trouble Magan Kaka should translate to the strikers his speech to them. If he himself addressed them, said the Lieutenant, they would not understand him. If the interpreter he had with him translated his remarks the strikers might be excited. That was why he was requesting Magan Kaka to interpret his remarks to the strikers.

When Magan Kaka said that he would like to consult Mr. West he was told that Mr. West had already been arrested and might be now in Durban. Magan Kaka asked if Mr. West had been arrested why there was no warrant for his own arrest. The Lieutenant's answer was that the Government did not want to arrest him but would like his help in sending the strikers back to work. Magan Kaka agreed to convey the message to the strikers, but added that they would continue to offer food and shelter to all those who stayed on in Phoenix.

### Children Undisturbed

After his conversation Magan Kaka sent me to the house to look after the children. I found them gathered round Imam Saheb's daughter, Fatima. They had seen Mr. West being arrested and taken away in a car. But nobody was in any way disturbed. On hearing about the Lieutenant's conversation with Magan Kaka, Fatima asked me to go and tell him that there was no cause for worry on the score of the children. On my way back to the press I found a great deal of excitement among the women who had come with the strikers. They had heard of the

arrival of the mounted soldiers and were in terror. An old woman asked me if the soldiers had come to shoot them. I tried to reassure them. Some of the younger women told the others that nobody could harass them in Gandhiji's house. One of the other women argued that if children like me were not afraid why should grown-ups have any fear?

Arriving near the press I and Magan Kaka repeated sentence by sentence the remarks addressed by the Lieutenant to the strikers who were obviously disheartened because of the advice being given them. The process of interpretation continued for about three quarters of an hour.

### **Back to Work**

Before leaving, the Lieutenant told Magan Kaka that he would post a few soldiers around the place to prevent more strikers from entering Phoenix. He also expressed the hope that Magan Kaka would help in sending away those who were already there. In reply Magan Kaka explained that he would have no objection to soldiers being posted there. But he once again repeated that strikers would continue to be looked after.

By the evening, on all the roads out of Phoenix one could see an unending stream of men and women going away to face whatever was in store for them in their places of work.



## CHAPTER XIX

### MOURNING FOR VICTIMS OF SATYAGRAHA STRUGGLE

Phoenix was the centre of the struggle against the £3 tax. It was from there that the first batch of Satyagrahis had set out to court arrest. The striking indentured workers had collected there in their thousands. The movement was guided through the *Indian Opinion* which was brought out in Phoenix, and it was from there that news of the struggle was sent out to India to educate public opinion about the problem.

Moves to suppress the agitation were similarly tried in Phoenix. The Africans, who were watching this conflict between the people of two nations not belonging to the country, were also looking towards Phoenix. Not far from the settlement was a large African school and its teachers studied the developments with great care.

Many white friends visited Gandhiji but only two among them could be considered residents of Phoenix. They were Mr. West and Mr. Todd, both Englishmen. Mr. West was a part of the Ashram and his whole family had become one with us all. Mr. Todd was a neighbour. I do not know where his family was. Whenever we saw Mr. Todd he was alone. One would see him riding round his plantation, whip in hand. The two men were a study in contrast. While Mr. West lived a simple, austere, selfless life of the Ashram, Mr. Todd lived by exploiting the labour of others. He was a terror to the strikers and children took special care to keep out of his way.

After the strikers had left Phoenix, Magan Kaka said he had never imagined that Mr. West would be arrested before he himself was. It was Mr. West who used to send reports of the developments from day to day to Mr. Gokhale and perhaps that was why the Government had taken him away. While this topic was under discussion Mrs. West arrived there and disclosed that it was Mr. Todd

who had been instrumental in the arrest of her husband. Both she and her aged mother had a good deal to say against Mr. Todd.

### **Story of Arrest**

Mr. West had just sat down for his evening tea when a motor-car stopped outside their house. In it were three armed soldiers. Behind the car were four mounted men, one of whom was Mr. Todd. He called Mr. West and when he went to the motor-car he was shown the warrant of his arrest. After signing the warrant, Mr. West came in to dress but had hardly any time to speak to his family. One of the soldiers had followed him into the house and within a few minutes he was rushed away in the car even before he had had his tea. Having got Mr. West arrested, Mr. Todd had not the courage to go among the strikers and had therefore ridden away.

Relating this story Mrs. West began to weep. Her husband's arrest had come as a shock to her. The struggle was being carried on by Indians. The Government was of the whites. The arrest of a white man was, therefore, rather unexpected.

Magan Kaka did his best to console Mrs. West and it was decided that Devibehn, who was the elder sister of Mr. West, should take both Mrs. West and her mother to Durban, try to arrange an interview with Mr. West and decide their future in consultation with him.

### **Mr. West Threatened**

For two days after Mr. West's arrest we had no news of him. Late on the second night we heard that he had been given no food the day he was arrested. He was produced in court the next morning and released on bail for a week.

On the evening of the third day, Fakirabhai came running to us. He was breathless. Excitedly he said that Mr. West was in danger as Mr. Todd, who had a whip in his hand, had stopped him on the way. Magan Kaka and Devadas rushed out. About half an hour later I saw the West family, Magan Kaka and Devadas returning along with a man on a horse.



What had happened was that when Mr. West, accompanied by his family, arrived at the station Mr. Todd dared him to cross the station premises threatening to beat him up. He was in a ferocious mood and was flicking his whip. The station master arranged on the telephone for a mounted soldier from the next station to escort Mr. West safely to Phoenix.

Early next morning the Wests locked up their house and left for Durban. Devibehn, however, stayed behind to continue her work in the Ashram.

### **Satyagrahi's Death**

A few soldiers stayed on in Phoenix even after the strikers had left. They would pounce upon any stray strikers they came across. Nobody, however, told them about the presence of Surjhai in the settlement for nearly a fortnight. One day someone showed them where Surjhai lived and both he and his wife had to leave Phoenix. A few days later we heard that Surjhai was dead.

It was about this time that Magan Kaka told us that Mr. Gokhale had sent a learned clergyman and a friend of his to take the place of Mr. West in Phoenix. Those who were coming were Rev. C. F. Andrews and Mr. W. W. Pearson.

Our story has taken us close to the end of the year 1913. Half of December had passed and before Christmas the sixteen Satyagrahis who had gone to jail were to be released. There were, however, still over ten months for Gandhiji's term in jail to be completed. When one day unexpectedly, Miss Schlesin came and told us that Gandhiji had been released, our happiness knew no bounds.

### **Face-saving Device**

Gandhiji had been in Pretoria jail. Two days after release from there he arrived in Durban and stopped there on account of some business. He did not come to Phoenix, but news about him came to Magan Kaka from there at regular intervals. We heard that along with Gandhiji, Mr. Polak and Mr. Kallenbach had also been released. The Union Government, we heard, had appointed a Commission, and it was to enable them to give evidence before it

that the three had been released and were busy in Durban with this affair.

Listening to the conversation between Magan Kaka and Miss Schlesin, we gathered that the Satyagraha activity this time had disturbed the Government greatly and in order to end it they were anxious to find a means whereby they could save face and at the same time concede the demands of the Indians. It was with this excuse that the Commission had been appointed.

The three persons who constituted the Commission were all whites and were friends of the mine-owners and land-owners who had for months been waging a war of cruelty against the indentured workers.

At the suggestion of Magan Kaka it was decided that Devadas should go to Phoenix station and from there speak to Gandhiji on the telephone to find out when he would be coming to Phoenix. All of us children accompanied Devadas to the station. After the trouble with Mr. Todd we had to take the long jungle route to the station.

### **Railway Strike**

In order to get to the platform we had to cross the railway line, but we had to stop before we could do so. A white soldier was guarding the track with a rifle on his shoulder. Further ahead we could see several other such guards. Before the arrest of Mr. West we had hardly ever seen any soldiers in Phoenix and even after that we saw them, who came to take back the indentured workers, only occasionally.

To know why they were there, Devadas questioned one of the soldiers. He was told that due to the railway workers' strike there was danger of trains being derailed. That was why martial law had been imposed in that area. We were allowed to go to the station but were told to leave it before dark.

When we arrived at the station we found the atmosphere there cheerful. The station master, who was a man of few words and usually busy, was glad about the release



of Gandhiji. He readily arranged for Devadas to speak on the telephone to Gandhiji at Seth Rustomji's house. Gandhiji spoke on the telephone and told Devadas that he would be coming to Phoenix that very night. He would, he said, be accompanied by two or three guests and would be returning to Durban early next morning.

### Visit to Phoenix

We were all excited at the thought of Gandhiji's visit and ran to the settlement to give the news to Magan Kaka. After making arrangements for the evening, all of us returned to the station to receive Gandhiji. With him came Thambi Naidu and other guests. Each of us rushed to touch Gandhiji's feet and he blessed us.

From news of Gandhiji's jail life we had received, we had learnt that due to rest and a fruit diet in jail he had regained the strength he had lost in the march with the indentured workers. But when I saw him at Phoenix station I was struck by his weak health. He had in the two and a half months in jail been reduced to half his former self. Even his voice had become weak.

We had all heard of Thambi Naidu who came with Gandhiji. Whenever we discussed among ourselves as to who was one of the foremost South African Indian Satyagrahis, we mentioned Thambi Naidu. But this was the first time I had seen him. He was taller and stouter than Gandhiji and was dark and had a pointed nose. He had a rough thick voice. Seeing him we had no doubts left that he must indeed be a very courageous man.

Gandhiji, while in jail, had asked for Tamil books to be able to learn the language which was spoken by the majority of the indentured labourers in South Africa. As soon as he came out of jail he again took up the cause of those who had suffered and sacrificed so much during the Satyagraha struggle. To identify himself with them he decided to wear the shirt and *lungi* worn by Tamil workers and to go bare-headed and bare-footed like them.

Gandhiji heard the stories of those who had given their lives in the struggle. One of them, Harbat Singh, who

was over sixty, had been in jail with Gandhiji himself and had died there. Outside jail Anthony Muttu's father had died of a bullet wound. When Anthony, who had been wounded, his younger brother and their widowed mother visited Phoenix, they were beside themselves with grief. There was Surjhai's case also. In addition, only three days after Gandhiji's release, Miss Valliamma died in Johannesburg. Even though sick, she had refused to be released.

Gandhiji did not want to cry with people who had lost those dear to them, but he did want to express his sympathy and closeness to those who had sacrificed so much. During his visit to Phoenix he discussed this question with Magan Kaka at midnight. He said that it was at his bidding that thousands of innocent people had jumped into the struggle and faced untold sufferings. How could he remain aloof from them? He must become one with them. He, therefore, asked Magan Kaka to get him a *kurta* and a *lungi* immediately. To carry such articles as pencil, pen-knife, handkerchief, and papers, etc., he said, he would use a cloth bag. In addition, Gandhiji decided to shave off his moustache, in mourning for the dead, and also to go barefooted.

The change in dress involved a great amount of courage in South Africa of those days and it had a tremendous effect on the people.

### Letter to Smuts

On his return to Durban, Gandhiji, we heard, had sent a letter to General Smuts, demanding that in the Commission appointed by the Government to go into the question of the £3 levy, one representative in whom Indians had confidence should be included. Both Gandhiji and Mr. Polak had made this demand jointly. They pointed out that they would not insist on an Indian being appointed on the Commission, but if this body did not include anyone enjoying the confidence of Indians, they would not appear before it to give evidence.

Gandhiji would, we were told, wait for a reply from General Smuts until the end of December after which he would start another march from Durban on a scale bigger



than the one started from Charlestown. Other Indian leaders agreed to the conditions laid down by Gandhiji and Mr. Polak and all pledged themselves not to appear before the Commission to give evidence.

When preparing the residents of Phoenix for Satyagraha Gandhiji never mentioned the weapon of strike as part of the struggle. The strike, however, when it came, appeared to be one of the simplest means of carrying on the struggle. Actually, the strike had spread not because of any guidance or leadership. Workers had joined it of their own accord. But how fierce a strike can be, became clear, when, during the miners' agitation, the railwaymen of South Africa also struck work. The two strikes were poles apart, so far as the manner in which they were conducted was concerned. A majority of railwaymen were English, while the Government was in the hands of the Boers.

### **Boers' Attitude**

An idea of what the strike had involved was given to us at Phoenix station by a Boer soldier, who was very critical of the English railwaymen, and openly said that, if the Government had to bend, it would bend before the non-violent agitation of the Indians and not before the aggressive tactics of the railwaymen. The railwaymen, he said, had made it almost impossible to run trains except with the help of armed soldiers. They had damaged railway property at various places and had even attacked shops in Johannesburg. They had burnt the Johannesburg station and attacked railway offices. The strike had spread in various parts of the Transvaal. It had taken a very violent form and would now be spreading to Natal.

The railwaymen's main demand was an increase in wages and, according to the Boer soldier, the Government would never be intimidated by the violence of the strikers.

We ourselves saw the effects of the railway strike when we went from Phoenix to Durban to welcome the first batch of Satyagrahis which was to be released. On the way we saw the track being guarded by soldiers carrying

rifles with fixed bayonets. Very few people were at work and those who were, were being guarded by armed soldiers. Arriving at Durban station, we rushed towards the jail, so that we should be in time to receive the released Satyagrahis. By the time we reached the jail gates, we found that the Indian citizens of Durban had collected there in hundreds to welcome their beloved leader, Seth Rustomji.

### **Leaders Welcomed**

The crowd outside Durban jail, gathered since early morning, had to wait until midday for the release of the Satyagrahis. The first to come out of the gate was my father, and the last Rustomji Seth, whose appearance led to shouting of slogans by the people. They surrounded him and cheered him. Soon the whole crowd began to rush towards the station. It was time for the train from Maritzburg to arrive. Gandhiji himself had gone to Maritzburg to bring Kasturba and the three sisters from Phoenix to Durban. With him was Mr. Kallenbach also.

Kasturba and others were welcomed by a huge crowd. She had become a shadow of her former self. The cheerfulness that was seen outside Durban jail was absent at the Durban station. Seeing Gandhiji and particularly Kasturba so pulled down and haggard had come to the people as a shock. They did not know how to welcome them. Some young people wanted to take them in procession in an open carriage which they wanted to pull themselves. Gandhiji dissuaded them, and owing to Kasturba's weak condition, the plan was abandoned and Gandhiji and Kasturba drove in a carriage to Seth Rustomji's house, followed by a crowd of thousands shouting *Vande Mataram*.

### **Kasturba's Health**

On her return from Maritzburg jail, Kasturba became bedridden, as the treatment in jail had broken her health completely within three months. Her illness became so serious that the usual rule in Phoenix, according to which no doctor was ever consulted, was broken. Magan Kaka and Devadas went one midnight to the Phoenix station



and telephoned a doctor in Durban to come and see her. The doctor came and examined her. But I do not know whether she took any medicine prescribed by him and what effect it had. What I do remember is that Gandhiji was then away in the Transvaal. On return, in spite of his being busy with Satyagraha work as well as negotiations with the Government, he attended on Kasturba with greater care than any trained nurse could.

On his return to India, Gandhiji was perhaps the most photographed man. In one of these photographs, Gandhiji was seen sitting on a stool with Kasturba massaging his feet. It is said, when Gandhiji saw this picture, he asked the photographer why he had not ever photographed him attending on Ba and had only shown her looking after him. I wish someone had snapped Gandhiji in Phoenix when he was nursing Kasturba !

### **Duty and Affection**

This was not Kasturba's first serious illness. Earlier, in 1908, when the Satyagraha had just been started, and Gandhiji was serving a two months' sentence of imprisonment, he wrote the following letter to Kasturba dated November 9, 1908 :

"I have received Mr. West's telegram about your illness. I feel heart-broken, but I cannot come to look after you. I have sacrificed all in the Satyagraha struggle. I can come out only if I pay a fine and that is not to be done. You must not lose heart. If you regulate your diet you will certainly get well. But even if it is my fate to lose you, then all that I can say is that it will not be something bad for you to die in separation while I am alive. I love you so much that even if you are dead you will always be alive to me. I repeat, what I have already told you, that I shall never marry again. You should depart with faith in God. Such death will also be in accordance with Satyagraha. My struggle is not merely political ; it is also a righteous struggle and is, therefore, entirely pure. In it life or death do not make any difference. I have the hope that you will go through everything with the same view in mind. That is what I ask of you."

## CHAPTER XX

### NO CHANGE IN DECISION TO BOYCOTT COMMISSION

How attached Kasturba was to Gandhiji is clear from the way she reacted to the news of his arrest for the first time in 1908. A feast was on in the house when the telegram arrived.

Among the dishes prepared was a milk delicacy to which Kasturba was very partial. She did not, however, touch any food and quietly made a pledge not to take milk while Gandhiji was in jail. She refused to take milk even when it was necessary for her health. She also gave up other food and for days lived on maize porridge alone. Even when she was forced to take a little bread she took it without any butter, arguing that since in jail these things were not available, she had no right to eat them.

#### **Worried in Jail**

When she herself went to jail she lost weight because of the meagre fruit diet she was living on and because she was greatly worried about Gandhiji who had been sentenced to a year's imprisonment. She did not know that Gandhiji had been released even before her term was over. She came to know of it only when on her release she found Gandhiji waiting for her at the jail gates.

Though Gandhiji was both affectionate and tender towards Kasturba, he could be very firm where public duty was concerned. Shri Raojibhai Patel in his book *Gandhijini Sadhana* has related an incident of the time when the Gandhi-Smuts agreement was about to be signed in Pretoria. The rough draft of the agreement had already been prepared and letters were to be exchanged within 24 hours to finalize the settlement. At this stage a telegram arrived from Phoenix informing Gandhiji of Kasturba's serious condition and asking him to go to Phoenix immediately. Gandhiji showed the telegram to Rev. C. F. Andrews who was with him. Mr. Andrews suggested that they should leave for Phoenix at once. Gandhiji said that he could not put the settlement affecting the whole Indian



community into the melting pot by leaving for Phoenix. His duty was to stay on to make the agreement final.

### **Agreement Finalized**

Seeing Gandhiji determined, Mr. Andrews spoke to General Smuts on the telephone and told him about the telegram from Phoenix. The General's reply was that Gandhiji could certainly leave for Phoenix since the agreement had already been made. Mr. Andrews explained Gandhiji's attitude and asked General Smuts if he was prepared to exchange letters during the evening. Though busy, General Smuts agreed to finalize the settlement and Mr. Andrews was able to take Gandhiji to Phoenix that night.

Later, Gandhiji was in Cape Town in connection with the session of Parliament being held there. He had taken Kasturba with him there. Devadas had been left behind in Phoenix to carry on his work in the Ashram. Gandhiji, however, sent him reassuring letters about Kasturba's condition which was still serious.

### **Value of Detachment**

Here is one of the letters sent by Gandhiji to Devadas :

"You must improve your handwriting. Ba's health has taken a turn for the worse. Doctor's medicine has had a very bad effect. But it was she herself who wanted to be treated by a doctor.... We have all resolved not to fear death. There is, therefore, no need for anxiety. The body is not immortal and one dies at the appointed moment and we are made to act according to it. The soul, however, is immortal. Knowing the nature of the body we must develop saintliness and detachment. By saintliness I do not mean the crude renunciation of the *sadhu*. It should have connection with one's conduct. By detachment I mean dislike of pleasures and possession. If you learn all this from Ba's illness you will be expressing your true affection for her."

" Blessings from Bapu "

Many weeks passed after the release of Gandhiji, Mr. Polak and Mr. Kallenbach, but nobody else was released before the expiry of his term. General Smuts turned down Gandhiji's suggestion for the inclusion of a member of his own Parliament, either Sir James Rose-Innes or the Hon. W. P. Schreiner in the Solomon Commission which was to go into the Indian case. This made Satyagrahis feel

that no change of heart had taken place among the whites and that they would have to intensify the struggle.

### **Viceroy's Emissary**

Meanwhile, it was reported that Gokhale had written to Gandhiji to postpone the proposed march from Durban and to co-operate with the Commission. A couple of days later the news arrived that Lord Hardinge, the then Viceroy of India, had sent Sir Benjamin Robertson, Governor of the C. P., as his representative to South Africa. Sir Benjamin, it was reported, was coming by a warship which would be covering the distance between Colombo and Durban in only nine days.

It was said that Indian leaders were not too pleased with Gandhiji and were sending him telegrams advising against resumption of the Satyagraha. Their view-point was that Lord Hardinge should be trusted and if the Commission was boycotted and the Satyagraha struggle resumed, the Viceroy might no longer help the Indian cause in South Africa and those sending financial help from India might also be obliged to stop it.

### **Gokhale's Cablegram**

The Satyagrahis' view, however, was that if the march from Durban to the Transvaal was successful, even Mr. Gokhale would be pleased about it and that that was the only way to achieve victory in the fight against the whites. Mr. Gokhale's cablegram to Gandhiji was to the following effect :

"The news about your decision to boycott the Commission and to start another march on new-year's day has caused me great anxiety. Your decision has placed both Lord Hardinge and me in a difficult position. You should accept the Commission in the faith that the Union Government will solve the problems facing you. You should give up the march and tender evidence before the Commission."

This cablegram put the South African Indians in a dilemma. Many of their leaders asked Gandhiji to accept Mr. Gokhale's assurance and advice. But Gandhiji was not moved. His firm reply was that even if the King himself were to give the assurance that India would be given independence if the Commission were accepted, he would still



say that he did not want such an emasculated and insulting independence. What would that independence be like which was attained by dishonouring India and lowering ourselves? And how long would it last? India's honour came first. Independence would come meekly following behind.

### **Righteous Pledge**

After announcing his firm determination to his associates Gandhiji sent the following cablegram to Mr. Gokhale :

"We realize how you are pained, and would like to follow your advice at considerable sacrifice. Lord Hardinge has rendered priceless aid, which we wish we would continue to receive till the end. But we are anxious that you should understand our position. It is a question of thousands of men having taken a pledge to which no exception can be taken. Our entire struggle has been built upon a foundation of pledges. Many of us would have fallen back today had it not been for the compelling force of our pledges. All moral bonds would be relaxed at once if thousands of men once proved false to their plighted word. The pledge was taken after full and mature deliberation, and there is nothing immoral about it. The community has an unquestionable right to pledge itself to boycott. We wish that even you should advise that a pledge of this nature should not be broken but be observed inviolate by all, come what might. Please show this cable to Lord Hardinge. We wish you might not be placed in a false position. We have commenced this struggle with God as our witness and His help as our sole support. We desire and bespeak the assistance of elders as well as big men, and are glad when we get it. But whether or not such assistance is forthcoming, we are humbly of opinion that pledges must ever be scrupulously kept. We desire your support and your blessing in such observance." \*

### **March Postponed**

Both Mr. Gokhale and the Viceroy were displeased at this attitude of Gandhiji's but continued to extend their help. General Smuts was greatly impressed by Gandhiji's determination and seeing a little change in General Smuts's attitude, Gandhiji decided to postpone the march by ten days. He made this decision to avoid making difficulties for the Government which was already faced with the railway strike. Gandhiji felt that he should not support

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\* *Satyagraha in South Africa*, pp. 324-25, Edn. 1950.

even indirectly the violent movement of the railwaymen and let it be known to General Smuts that he would give him time until January 10 (1914) to deal with the railwaymen's strike.

Another postponement of fifteen days was decided upon in response to a telegram from Miss Hobhouse, a member of the South African Parliament. Miss Hobhouse had earned a great reputation for service by looking after women and children war sufferers during the Boer War. She was not known personally to Gandhiji except through her humanitarian work. But when her message arrived Gandhiji readily accepted her suggestion thus proving the rational character of the Satyagraha creed.

### Meetings in India

The people as well as the leaders of India did their best to help and support the movement in South Africa. Among the leaders who worked to be able to send help were Mr. Gokhale, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, Mr. K. Nataraajan, Mahatma Munshiram (later known as Swami Shradhanand), and Dr. Rabindranath Tagore. There were public meetings in many cities of India and funds were collected. Students gave up their meals to be able to save money for the cause. At one of the meetings in Lahore an Englishman announced the gift of all his savings for food and other needs of the South African Indian Satyagrahis.

Mr. Gokhale kept this young Englishman in mind, and when Mr. Polak, Mr. Kallenbach and Mr. West were arrested, he sent this Englishman to create an awakening among the whites of South Africa and to help in the struggle. Perhaps not even Mr. Gokhale had any idea at the time that this young man would dedicate his entire life to the service of down-trodden Indians and earn the title of Dinabandhu — friend of the poor. This was Rev. C. F. Andrews, who came to South Africa along with Mr. W. W. Pearson.

### Arrival of Mr. Andrews

When Mr. Andrews landed, he saw among those who had collected to welcome him a man in a *lungi* and *kurta* with close cropped hair and a staff in hand. Probably he





Gandhiji as he appeared at the end of the Struggle







took him for a *sadhu*. He asked Mr. Polak, who had interested him in India, in the cause of Indians overseas, where Gandhiji was, since it was him he wanted to meet first. The question made everybody smile and when Gandhiji was pointed out to him, Mr. Andrews bowed before him with great deference. Mr. Pearson followed suit and both of them from then on became his followers.

It was something unheard of that a white man should bow before any "black coolie". South African papers, therefore, criticized Mr. Andrews's behaviour and asked both him and Mr. Pearson not to repeat their conduct, which was calculated to lower the prestige of the whites. Mr. Andrews, in a very learned way, read them a lesson on humanity and justified doing honour to men like Gandhiji.

When Mr. Andrews and Mr. Pearson visited Phoenix, they greeted the elders with their palms joined together in the Indian style and touched the heads of the youngsters in blessing. So far we had met Englishmen with whom it was necessary to shake hands. Seeing these two behave like ourselves we felt that they were no strangers to us. We soon lost our shyness with them and by the time they reached the Ashram from the station we began to feel close to them.

In the evening after the prayers Mr. Andrews addressed us. He said he had come from Gurudev Tagore. There was no end to the things he could tell us about Shantiniketan, but at the moment, he said, he would only give us Gurudev's message. He stood up and began to recite a Sanskrit *mantra* in a soft tone. Gurudev, he said, had been greatly impressed by the Satyagraha. He had given this *mantra* \* to them which said that whatever they did, it should be in pursuit of truth, for the good of all and with the consciousness of God's presence around them. If this was done, only good would result from all actions.

His address that day was short because he had to discuss problems connected with the Satyagraha with Gandhiji.

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\* सत्यं ज्ञानं अनन्तं ब्रह्मानंदरूपम् । अमृतं यद्विभाति शांतं शिवमद्रैतम् ॥

## CHAPTER XXI

### AGREEMENT WITH SMUTS

Had Mr. Pearson lived long he, too, like Mr. C. F. Andrews, would have found an abiding place in the hearts of Indians. But he lived only four or five years after his South Africa tour.

Mr. Andrews won our respect by expounding to us the high ideals of a Satyagrahi. Mr. Pearson won our hearts through his simplicity and friendliness. To the children he was a good teacher and to the grown-ups an affectionate friend. He never indulged in light-hearted jokes or sarcasm, but always had a quiet smile on his face.

#### **Lover of Nature**

Mr. Pearson stayed in Phoenix no more than two or three weeks. But he became one with the children. He had not come there to teach us but to have a first-hand idea of the Satyagraha struggle. But he soon attracted all the children to himself and would tell us fascinating things about plants, flowers and insects. He was a great lover of nature and made everything look new to us.

While Mr. Andrews spent his time discussing political problems with Gandhiji, Mr. Pearson studied the life of the people. He walked for most of the day around Phoenix and saw how Indian indentured labourers lived. He also visited Africans' homes and found out what their problems were. When the talks between Gandhiji and General Smuts were in progress in Pretoria, it was hoped that Mr. Andrews and Mr. Pearson would be able to stay for some time in Phoenix. But both of them had to go on a tour of the cities of South Africa where Mr. Andrews created a feeling of sympathy for Indians through his speeches. While they were still on tour Mr. Andrews received news of his father's death in London. He had, therefore, to leave for London immediately and Mr. Pearson went with him.

#### **Official Visitor**

Even before the departure of Mr. Andrews and Mr. Pearson, another English visitor came from India to



South Africa. This was Sir Benjamin Robertson who came accompanied by his Private Secretary, Mr. Slater. With them was an Indian official, Rai Sahib Sarkar.

On his return from the Transvaal Sir Benjamin spent a good deal of his time meeting Indians in Natal. Since the Indians had taken a pledge to boycott the Solomon Commission, Sir Benjamin was trying his best to persuade them to alter their decision. As a representative of the Government of India he was anxious that some evidence at least should be given before the Commission to secure justice for the Indian indentured labourers. But few Indians were ready to come forward. It was perhaps to find out why Gandhiji had such a hold on the Indian community that Sir Benjamin decided to visit Phoenix.

### **Arrival at Station**

Gandhiji himself did not go to Phoenix station to receive Sir Benjamin. One or two prominent workers went along with four or five boys who could carry his luggage. Mr. Polak had accompanied him from Durban.

To receive Mr. Andrews and Mr. Pearson, almost the entire Ashram had gone to the station. But this was different. There was no crowd and no garlands for Sir Benjamin. He seemed to be surprised to find a few students dressed like village folks waiting for him. One of us, Revashankar Sodha, stepped forward to shake hands with Sir Benjamin, but he did not respond. He exchanged a few remarks with Maganbhai Master and Raojibhai and then started walking towards Phoenix followed by his Private Secretary and the Indian official, Mr. Sarkar. Evidently they did not relish covering two and a half miles' distance on foot ; for, they kept quiet throughout.

### **Meeting with Gandhiji**

An account of Sir Benjamin's visit has been given by Shri Raojibhai Patel. According to him, Gandhiji received Sir Benjamin at the door of his house and offering him and his companions fruits told them that they were all from the Phoenix garden, from trees planted and nurtured by the inmates themselves. The visitors ate some of the

fruits and later Gandhiji told Sir Benjamin that he himself would not be able to take them round the institution since Mrs. Gandhi was ill. Sir Benjamin got up, asked about Kasturba's health and also expressed a desire to meet her. Gandhiji took him to Kasturba's bed. Sir Benjamin found her lying on an improvised bed made of two benches. He could not have helped being impressed by the simplicity of life at the Ashram. Mr. Polak showed the visitors round, after which they walked back to the station.

Gandhiji himself has written about Sir Benjamin's visit as follows :

"Mr. Andrews and I had frequent interviews with General Smuts before these letters were exchanged.\* But meanwhile Sir Benjamin Robertson too arrived at Pretoria. Sir Benjamin was looked upon as a popular official, and he brought a letter of recommendation from Gokhale, but I observed that he was not entirely free from the usual weakness of the English official. He had no sooner come than he began to create factions among the Indians and to bully the Satyagrahis. My first meeting in Pretoria did not prepossess me in his favour. I told him about the telegrams I had received informing me of his bullying procedure. I dealt with him, as indeed with everyone else in a frank and straightforward manner, and we therefore became friends. But I have often seen that officials are apt to bully those who will tamely submit to them, and will be correct with those who are correct themselves and will not be cowed down....

"Mr. Andrews was the mediator and the witness in the present agreement, and then there was Sir Benjamin Robertson as representing the Government of India. There was therefore the least possible likelihood of the agreement being subsequently repudiated....

### **Pledges Not Broken**

"Sir Benjamin Robertson tried to induce many to tender evidence but failed except in the case of a few who were strongly opposed to Satyagraha. The boycott of the Commission did not produce any bad effect. Its work was shortened and its report was published at once. The Commission strongly criticized the Indians for withholding their assistance and dismissed the charges of misbehaviour against the soldiers, but recommended compliance without delay with all the demands of the Indian community, such as for instance the repeal of the £3 tax and the validation

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\* To reach the provisional agreement which was soon followed by permanent settlement in the form of the Indians Relief Bill.



of Indian marriages, and the grant of some trifling concessions in addition. Thus the report of the Commission was favourable to the Indians as predicted by General Smuts." \*

Among other visitors to Phoenix at the time was an old lady from Cape Town, Miss Molteno. She was an associate of Miss Hobhouse. While at Phoenix Miss Molteno showed great sympathy with Kasturba who was then sick. She was very keen to study the Indian way of life.

Gradually the atmosphere at Phoenix began to change. The Satyagraha struggle no longer appeared to be in the offing. The routine of the Ashram was fully resumed, even though we still wondered when jail going would start again.

### **Sandals for Smuts**

One day I found the cobbler's hut in the Ashram being cleaned and the implements being sharpened. I began to look at the instruments believing that perhaps we were to be trained in a new craft. But one of our senior students told me that all this activity was to enable them to make a pair of sandals for General Smuts who had asked for it.

It appears that when Gandhiji was carrying on negotiations for a preliminary agreement with General Smuts, the General, or perhaps his Secretary, mentioned to him that sandals made at the Ashram were very good and he would like to have a pair. The sandals were made and Gandhiji himself examined the pair carefully before he sent it to General Smuts as a gift. This was during the period of uncertainty as the preliminary agreement had yet to be finalized.

### **Distribution of Sweets**

One day news came that all the Satyagrahis had been released from all the jails in South Africa. This heartened us greatly and we began to hope that the position of Indians in South Africa would now improve.

The released Satyagrahis began to visit Phoenix. They would stay there for a day or so, ask for Gandhiji's blessings and return to their work. Most of them were illiterate working men, including many who were petty

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\* *Satyagraha in South Africa*, see pp. 331-32-33, Edn. 1950.

hawkers. They were prepared to go to jail as long as Gandhiji did not announce final victory in the struggle. General release, however, gave them the idea that the struggle was now over and some of them suggested to Gandhiji that success should be celebrated by distribution of sweets. Gandhiji readily agreed to the proposal and assured them that since general release was an indication of a final agreement, he would himself make arrangements to distribute sweets.

Large quantities of sweets made by Gujarati sweet makers in Durban were brought and Gandhiji himself distributed them among Satyagrahis, students and guests. While he was handing sweets to each one in turn, Gandhiji had a grave look on his face. He did not appear to be very enthusiastic about it.

### Golden Number

One of the elders among those present suggested that they should do something else to make their victory memorable. His proposal was that a souvenir number of the *Indian Opinion* might be brought out to mark the occasion. Gandhiji accepted the suggestion with a smile. He said such a number containing the whole story of the Satyagraha struggle should be brought out. But the agreement so far reached did not justify such a step. Gandhiji had agreed to have sweets distributed because Satyagrahis had been released, but the laws against which they had fought were still there. They would have achieved victory only when these laws were changed.

The souvenir or golden number of the *Indian Opinion* was not brought out as long as we were in Phoenix. But later it was prepared by Mr. Polak, who had been general editor of the *Indian Opinion* since 1906, my father, and other colleagues. Gandhiji himself wrote an account of this struggle while he was in Yeravda jail ten years later.\* He had written from memory. Comparing it with the account

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\* Gandhiji wrote this account in Gujarati entitled *Dakshina Africana Satyagrahano Itihas*, Navajivan, Price Rs. 3. Its English translation by V. G. Desai entitled *Satyagraha in South Africa* has been referred to previously.



in the *Indian Opinion* we find that he described all the developments in their correct chronological order.

This struggle was the first great chapter in Gandhiji's life and Indians in South Africa began to refer to him as "Lokamanya Gandhi" instead of "Gandhi Bhai". A few days later people felt that they should call him by some other title since "Lokamanya" was being used in India in reference to the great Indian political leader B. G. Tilak. They, therefore, gave Gandhiji the title of "Karmavir".

### **The General's Tactics**

During the Satyagraha struggle Gandhiji had insisted that the Satyagrahis should not commit any act of deception even against those who were known to be untrustworthy and deceptive in their ways. His associates often argued that he should not insist on spiritual conduct to such an extent. Even if they themselves were straightforward they should at least prevent the adversary from playing tricks with them.

The fact was that Indians had no faith in the assurances of General Smuts. In the first movement of 1908 Gandhiji fulfilled his part of the agreement in spite of some of his associates' opposition and the attack on him by Mir Alam, but Smuts did not keep his word about abolishing racial laws. He used the same tactics in 1911. He kept Satyagrahis waiting for a whole year and then announced in Parliament that the Asians could not have equal rights with the whites. Similarly, he had gone back on the promise given to Mr. Gokhale that the £3 levy on indentured Indians would be abolished by saying that he had not made any such promise. Nobody could, therefore, be certain that General Smuts would play fair this time.

Gandhiji's attitude, however, was different. He wanted that Indians should do nothing that would spoil the atmosphere. He suspended the Satyagraha and restrained everyone from even talking about a new struggle. Victory was on our side, but Gandhiji was anxious that nobody should say anything that might weaken the chances of a lasting agreement.

### **Commission at Work**

The Solomon Commission, meanwhile, was continuing its work in spite of our boycott. Some of us wanted to go and see how the Commission worked. None of us, however, had the courage to suggest it. One day Ramdas Gandhi, one of the senior-most and serious minded students, said that he would like to see the Commission at work. He was told that no one, particularly, from among the selected group from Phoenix, should go anywhere near the Commission. Ramdas, however, did not agree and he was allowed to go on condition that he would not declare his identity either as Gandhiji's son or as a student at Phoenix. I was allowed to go with him. A tried Satyagrahi, Shri Surendranath Medh, accompanied us.

We walked from Phoenix to see the Commission at work. I do not remember whether we went to Durban or elsewhere. But we did see the Commission at work. Three white men sat in a big room. We watched them from across the path where a number of other Indians were also standing. I do not know what they said or wrote. But we were impressed by the fact that witnesses appeared at long intervals and each came out after a short while. We were happy to see that our boycott of the Commission was effective.

### **Gandhiji Vigilant**

Gandhiji had been asking us to be patient but he himself was very vigilant about every move of the Smuts Government. He was also trying to get ambiguities in General Smuts's statements clarified. This is evident from a letter he wrote from Pretoria to Shri Raojibhai Patel in Phoenix. The letter dated January 21, 1914, was as follows :

"I was hoping to leave for Johannesburg today with Mr. Andrews, but I have not been able to do so. General Smuts's reply to my letter has not been satisfactory. I want it to be amended and shall have to stay here tomorrow. On having received a satisfactory reply I shall be able to say that the agreement has been finalized, and it will then be a big step forward. I cannot explain everything in this letter since I have immediately to go and meet Sir Benjamin Robertson.





Gandhiji and Kasturba prior to their departure for India in 1914





“I am surprised that Maganbhai is not getting well. I want to spend a few days at Phoenix to look after him. Do whatever all of you can. I shall have some time if the reply from General Smuts is satisfactory. Please see that the students behave well.”

“ Blessings from Mohandas ”

### Ambiguous Language

General Smuts's language was always considered dangerous. From December 20, 1913, to June 30, 1914, Gandhiji was trying to get written clarifications from him of his various statements. Even after June 30, 1914, when the agreement was finally signed, Gandhiji spent nearly a month getting the position of Indians' rights cleared. It was Gandhiji's patience, intelligence and limitless generosity that changed General Smuts's heart and led to the success of the agreement between the two.

Writing about General Smuts, Gandhiji has said :

“ His Christian name is Jan, and South Africa used to call him ‘ slim Janny ’. Many English friends had asked me to beware of General Smuts, as he was a very clever man and a trimmer, whose words were intelligible only to himself and often of a kind that either party could interpret them in a sense favourable to himself. Indeed on a suitable occasion he would lay aside the interpretations of both the parties, put a fresh interpretation upon them, carry it out and support it by such clever arguments that the parties for the time would be led to imagine that they were wrong themselves and General Smuts was right in construing the words as he did....My experience of General Smuts in 1913-14 did not then seem bitter and does not seem so to me today, when I can think of the past events with a greater sense of detachment. It is quite possible that in behaving to the Indians as he did in 1908 General Smuts was not guilty of a deliberate breach of faith.” \*

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“I wrote articles in *Indian Opinion* under the caption of ‘ Foul Play ’, but what was that to the redoubtable General ? One may apply any bitter epithets one likes to a philosopher or a heartless man but in vain. They will follow the even tenor of their way. I do not know which of these two appellations would fit General Smuts. I must admit that there is a sort of philosophy about his attitude.” †

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\* *Satyagraha in South Africa*, pp. 189-90, Edn. 1950.

† Ibid, p. 197.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THOUGHTS ON DEATH AND LIFE

Gandhiji had made it almost his mission to do away with the fear of death. He was in Cape Town when he received the news of the death of his elder brother Kalidas (also known as Lakshmidas). How he had prepared himself for death is shown in a letter he wrote at the time :

“7, Buitensingle, Cape Town,  
“March 16, 1914”

“Dear Kallenbach,

“The greatest grief imaginable has befallen me. My brother died yesterday. I suppose simply thinking up to his last breath of me. What a passionate wish it was on his part to meet me! I was hurrying everything on so that I could go to India with the quickest dispatch and fall down at his feet and nurse him. But it was not to be. Now I must go to a family of widows with my poor self as the head. You who do not know the Indian patriarchal family system do not quite realize what this may mean. Anyway my desire to get to India is keener than ever. And yet who knows? I doubt very much whether I shall ever realize that desire. However I must prepare for the pilgrimage, and then leave it calmly in the hands of Him, who wields the almighty power.

“These shocks make in me for still more intense fearlessness of death. Why should the event agitate one? The grief itself has a selfish touch about it. It is no calamity that my brother is dead if I am ready to meet death and consider it as the supreme and welcome crisis in life. It is because we fear death so much for ourselves that we shed tears over the death of others. How can I who know the body to be perishable and the soul to be imperishable mourn over the separation of body from soul? But there is a condition attached to a real belief in this beautiful and consoling doctrine. He who believes in it must not pamper the body but must be its ruler. He must regulate his wants so as to make it serve the dweller within. Not to grieve over the death of others is to accept a state almost of perpetual grief. For this connection between body and soul is itself grievous.

“These are the thoughts that rule me just now. I shall not write another letter just now. This has written itself.”



### **Snake-bite and Fire**

During this period there were two incidents which led our thoughts to death. In one of them an unknown peasant was bitten by a green poisonous snake and Magan Kaka treated him by cutting one of his toes and filling the wound with potassium permanganate. Two or three days later there was another incident but of a different nature. It was Thursday. Some of us had finished dinner, while others were still eating. We saw a hut on fire and a woman crying near it. Immediately Magan Kaka, Raojibhai and ten or twelve others rushed towards the scene.

It did not take us long to realize that it was the voice of the wife of a man named Nepal. Nepal had been sick for a long time and his wife would shout at him every day after picking a quarrel with him. When we arrived we found that the hut, which was half a mile away, had already collapsed and it was difficult to bring even the corpse out. Next morning the woman was quiet and the only answer she gave to our question was that her husband had himself set the hut on fire. But many felt that she herself had done it deliberately.

### **Gandhiji's Reaction**

Many days later we discovered that the woman whom we had considered Nepal's wife was not legitimately so. At the end of the 19th century indentured labourers were lured to South Africa and only about fifteen to twenty women for every hundred men were sent there. As soon as they arrived at the sugarcane plantations, men and women were huddled together in barracks, some time a woman to more than one man. Thus Nepal and his wife might have been mutually attracted when they were young but they were not husband and wife.

The whole account of the death was sent to Gandhiji who wrote the following letter from Cape Town dated February 28, 1914.

“Dear Shri....

“I have received your letter. Nepal is now free. His wife has been found to be hard-hearted. Death should teach us our duty and to develop detachment for the body. There is, however,

no need to fear death. It appears that even if a man is burnt to death he does not suffer very much. When he begins to suffer extremely he faints. Those who are more attached to the body suffer more. But one who knows the reality of the soul is not disturbed by death. Thousands of lives are being lost every minute by burning or otherwise. In the whole universe Nepal was like a minute speck. All of us, knowingly or unknowingly, while lighting a fire or using a lamp burn a number of living things.

### Three Lessons

“Imagine someone of the stature of Brahma the Creator. In His eyes we are no bigger than ants. If the Creator burnt Nepal alive, He must have found it necessary to do so. In our view Nepal’s was a life equal to ours. We feel sorrow and compassion because we wonder what would happen to ourselves. But ants, bugs, and other insects which are not even visible are destroyed by us. We justify their destruction in our wisdom. Perhaps the Creator similarly justifies the destruction of people like us in His greater wisdom. If we realize this we can learn the following lessons :

“1. We should consider all living beings like ourselves and show them the same feeling as we have for ourselves.

“2. We should shake off attachment for the body and get rid of all fear of death.

“3. Realizing that the body is a deceiver we should begin preparing ourselves for liberation of the soul.

“It is easy to talk of these three maxims but much more difficult to ponder over them. But to act on them is like walking on the edge of a sword.

“It is early morning. My mind is running in this direction because Ba is again suffering and I am trying to free her from the fear of death.”

“ Blessings from Bapu ”

### Attitude to Luxury

Gandhiji had taken Kasturba with him to Cape Town to be able to look after her himself. He had also taken with him M to help him in nursing Kasturba and to attend on Mr. Andrews. J, who was among the last to be released from a jail near Cape Town, was also allowed to stay with Gandhiji.

Gandhiji’s host in Cape Town was Dr. G, who lived in a princely way in Western style. The life in his house was sharply in contrast with the life in Phoenix.

It was therefore not long before both the students were



sent back to Phoenix. They were both among the best students at Phoenix. They had been to jail and fasted there, and even in Cape Town they spent all their time as directed by Gandhiji, but still he did not want them to stay on in surroundings of luxury or even comfort.

### **Effect of Atmosphere**

In a letter written to J, dated February 26, 1914, Gandhiji said :

“I feel that both you and M have misunderstood me this time. Had I found that it was to your advantage to stay here I would not have let you go for any selfish reasons of mine. I cannot fight against the atmosphere here. You do not seem to have realized how subtle the effect of atmosphere is !

“I understood Dr. G’s fine qualities earlier than you did. I also know your qualities, but still you are young. I, therefore, hesitate to put others in your charge. Similarly I hesitate to put you in Dr. G’s charge. Dr. G himself realizes his weaknesses. That is why he has kept his own brother away from him. He is a good man in some respects but bad in others. I would not like to see his defects in you.

### **Need of Discrimination**

“You have not yet developed the power of discrimination. If you had, you would not have found any cause to criticize me harshly. You are finding my great affection too much for you. Sometimes it does happen like that. But you should calm yourself. The step I have taken is not thoughtless. Your charge that I behaved like a lawyer is not justified. You made that charge earlier also.

“I am beginning to feel that I have a special capacity to discriminate between good and evil. That is why my subtle arguments appear like those of a lawyer. Whatever it may be, you must say frankly what you wish to in your defence or to correct me.

“Ba is better, but still not out of danger.”

“Blessings from Bapu”

### **“Bitter Medicine”**

In another letter to M Gandhiji wrote :

“You have wrongly accused me of heartlessness. Could I have become heartless in no more than fifteen days? Others, at least, do not seem to have got that impression. Perhaps at the moment I seem unkind to you ; but it is so because, like a doctor, I have to prescribe a bitter medicine.

“I do not desire to make you a hermit, but I do want to see truthfulness, simplicity, gentleness etc. developed in your

character. I wish to see you free from the weaknesses common among men. I do not believe that you are completely free from them yet. I do not want you to follow me blindly. But I do want you to benefit from my experiences. You may send this letter to J."

" Blessings from Bapu "

Later on J related to me the details about this matter. He said :

"On being released from jail, when I went to Gandhiji, he was wearing his newly-adopted costume, a *lungi* and a shirt. When Gandhiji walked on the thoroughfares of Cape Town wearing this dress, white boys would cut jokes about it among themselves. Gandhiji, however, proceeded on his way as if nothing had happened.

"Ba was in weak health and needed care. Gandhiji did everything for her himself. I was given the opportunity to help him for a short while, but it was not long before Gandhiji asked us to leave Cape Town.

### Stay Cut Short

"It was on a Wednesday that Gandhiji asked us to leave on Saturday. Mr. Andrews was to leave for England on that day, an hour before us. M, thereupon, asked Gandhiji for permission to stay in Cape Town until Monday. On Sunday we had planned a trip to the well-known Table Mountain. Gandhiji, however, did not agree, saying, 'What is there so remarkable to see in the Table Mountain? When you go home to India you can go up to the Himalayas which can contain thousands of Table Mountains.'

"At the root of this firmness on the part of Gandhiji was his suspicion that we had been drawn towards pleasure. The way of life in our host's house was Westernized. We sat with them at the same table where they took rich non-vegetarian food. We did not like the idea of sitting separately. We felt it would not look graceful to keep away from them. Gandhiji, however, felt that we were being affected by the lavish way of life around us."

At times Gandhiji had to live in lavish surroundings, but he never gave up his austere way of life.

In a letter to M and J Gandhiji said :

"I have never demanded that all of you should always follow my example. But whatever you have taken upon yourself you must fulfil. After voluntarily taking the pledge of austerity, if you have thoughts of breaking it, it is your own fault. If those



at Phoenix consider it necessary to deny themselves certain things, why should they feel differently outside Phoenix ? If highly spiced food, tea, coffee and such other comforts are denied there, if late-rising and thieving are considered wrong there, how can one indulge in them elsewhere ?

“I understand from all this that when those who pledge to deny themselves some comfort or another, it is only to please me and that in fact they break their pledge when my eyes are turned. I should, in that case, not live with them. My duty at the moment, however, does not lie in that. I do not love anyone the more merely because he denies himself something. There is in fact no sin or goodness in salted or unsalted diet. It is the spirit in which things are undertaken.”

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### THE TWO LETTERS

[For reference please see page 34.]

Johannesburg,  
30th June, 1903

Dear Chhaganlal,

The enclosed is a copy of my letter to Shri Haridasbhai.\* It gives you all the news about me. Read and explain the situation here to your aunt (Mrs. Gandhi). It is highly desirable, if she decides to stay there. Life here is too expensive. If she remains there, and I here, savings made in this place, will enable her and the children to lead an easy life in India. In that case, I may be able to return in two or three years. But if she insists, I will not retreat from the promise I made to her on the eve of my departure. If, however, she decides to leave, make all the preparations by October and take the first available steamer in November. But try to bring home to her that the best course would be to stay at home. In consultation with Shri Revashankarbhai she may choose to stay either in Bombay or Rajkot. If you have not already started with Harilal, and your aunt intends to accompany you, also bring Ramdas and Devadas with her. Proper arrangements should also be made for the accommodation and education of Manilal and Gokuldas in Bombay. But, if Manilal is not willing to stay behind let him also join you. It would be well if Gokuldas continues to study in Bombay. Let me know his mind and also what Raliatbehn has to say about it.

Bring as many photographs and books as you can as per the list sent to you. All the money should better be deposited with Shri Revashankarbhai. Please see that the account of Fuli is closed. To enable you to settle the account with Shri Shivalalbhai, go to Rajkot, if you

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\* A friend and adviser of the Gandhi family, afterwards Harilal's father-in-law. He was a leading member of the Kathiawad Bar.



must. That will leave enough money with you for the passage.

In case your aunt prefers to stay in Rajkot, it would be better to bring Manilal here.

Maganlal is doing well at Tongaat.

Read this to Revashankarbhai. Being hurriedly written, he will find it difficult to decipher.

Blessings from Mohandas

(From the original in Gujarati)

My dear Haridasbhai,

I have your two letters. I am very glad that Harilal is now out of danger. You know that I sent a cablegram asking that he should be sent here with Chhaganlal ; and I do hope that he will be sent here. By the time he reaches, the cold weather will have passed and seeing that he must not go to school for some time to come, perhaps he will benefit by the change of climate and greater regularity of habits. Moreover your ideas about natural living will be far better enforced here than there. And I shall see, as far as possible, that he does not receive any drugs.

During my self-imposed exile, I have been overwhelmed with kindness from friends in India. I know that you and Revashankarbhai have supplied my place to Harilal. I do not wish to enlarge upon that subject. I can only wish that he was here to be attended to by me, and regret that he should have been a source of anxiety and worry to either of you.

I hope that you are not overworking yourself in your cases. I would like to know a little more about the nature of work you are getting there and the state of your health and that of the children. I am doing fairly well with reference to the office work. In fact, during the few months that I have opened an office here I notice that I have built up a decent practice, and that I can afford to pick and choose. The public work, however, is of a very exacting nature and often causes great anxiety. The result is that, just at present I have to work from nearly a quarter to

nine in the morning to ten o'clock at night with intervals for meals and a short walk. It is a time of constant exertion and worry and I see no prospect in the near future of the public work slackening. The Government is now considering the modification of the existing legislation and one has to be very much on the alert. The thing is most difficult to foresee. Such being the case, I do not know what my future plans will be, but the more I look into things, the more I feel that it will be almost impossible for me to get away for several years. The thing is that I shall very likely have to repeat what I had to do in Natal. The question then is, as to the fulfilment of my promise to Mrs. Gandhi. I told her that either I should return to India at the end of the year, or that she should come here by that time. I am most anxious to fulfil the promise. How to do it is the difficulty. To return at the end of the year is out of question. If, however, she would allow me to recede from the promise, and not insist on coming here, there is a likelihood of my being able to return to India earlier than I otherwise would. In any case, according to present plans, I must not think of returning for three or four years. Will she consent to remaining there all that time? If she does not, then, of course, she must come here at the end of the year, and I must be content quietly to settle down in Johannesburg for ten years or so. It would be a terrible thing to establish a new home here and to break it up as I did in Natal. Experience teaches me that it would cost a very great deal and if there were great difficulties about it in Natal, they will be greater in Johannesburg. Please, therefore, consider this thing, and if Mrs. Gandhi is where you are, then you may all counsel together and let me know. I do think however that if she would consent to remain there for the time being at any rate, it would enable me to give undivided attention to public work. As she knows, she had very little of my company in Natal. Probably she would have less in Johannesburg. However, I wish to be guided entirely by her sentiments, and I place myself absolutely in her hands. If she must come, then, she may make preparations in October and



leave in the beginning of November (1903). Between now and then, there will be plenty of time for exchange of news.

I am very glad Bali (Haridasbhai's daughter) is not to be married this year. The later she is married, the better it will undoubtedly be for herself and her future husband.

Yours sincerely,  
M. K. Gandhi

## APPENDIX B

### A BITTER EXPERIENCE

[The following episode that took place at Delagoa Bay is an illustration of how Gandhiji on account of colour and race prejudice was subjected to the most humiliating, unjust and discriminatory treatment in South Africa. Here is a rendering of the report that Gandhiji wrote for the Gujarati edition of the *Indian Opinion*, 28th Dec. 1912.]

Q. Are you an Indian ?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Are you born in India ?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Have you any papers ?

A. No, sir. I am an attorney of the Transvaal court and have a return ticket for Johannesburg, where I intend to proceed today.

The officer : That doesn't matter. Sit down. I shall see you later.

The above questions were put to me in an insulting tone by the Immigration Officer. We were on our way back after seeing Mr. Gokhale off as far as Zanzibar. We changed steamer at Beira to save time. There were about sixty deck passengers like us to disembark at Delagoa Bay. The Immigration Officer allowed all of them to land after examination. Passengers who wanted to proceed to Johannesburg by train were also examined and allowed to land.

Most of the passengers who travelled with us were Greeks. They were poor people. I was present when they were being examined. The work took about an hour and a half. After making enquiries about their name, residence, occupation etc., the officer gave them permits to land. Among them, there were many who wanted to go to Johannesburg. They seemed to have some papers with them most of them indicating that they had twenty pounds



or so in their possession. When my turn came, the officer put to me the questions I mentioned above.

Mr. Kallenbach was called after me. The officer asked him, "Have you any papers with you?" Kallenbach replied that he had none. Moreover, he introduced me to the officer and said that we had accompanied Mr. Gokhale as far as Zanzibar. I noticed that the officer did not even care to listen to what was said about me. He only replied, "I shall see his case later. I cannot give him a permit. He is an Indian." Mr. Kallenbach bit his lips. He took it as a grave insult. The fact that he obtained his permit so easily distressed him very much. How could he land without me? That was impossible. He was ashamed to receive his permit. Even when he received it, in anger, he said to me loudly enough so that the officer could hear him, "Look here, you are an Asiatic! You have black skin! I am an European, and have white skin! You have to remain here under detention." All the time I was laughing in my sleeve; but my heart was seething under fire. Why? I am an Indian. What an impudence on the part of the officer? What more insults from the whites are in store for the Indians? How unlucky we are! How far is it the whiteman's fault? What can the officer do? We have to gain or lose according to the impressions formed by the whites from our ways of life and conduct. We may suffer today, but shall gain tomorrow. Why should one blame the Indians in South Africa? For, do they not belong to the same India? Well then, what is my duty? Can I lose my temper and find fault with the officer? Not at all. Officialdom is blind. Well then, shall I sit silent? No. I must try to undo the mischief. How am I to do that? I must play my part. I must cease looking to my own interest. I must set an example to my Indian brethren to enable them to better their lot. They should be made to understand that their insanitary habits go much against them. As a fellow-passenger on deck, I should request them to learn and cherish self-respect. They should cast away unclean habits. That will raise them in the esteem of others. They should respect simple and innocent

laws of the whites and fight patiently and bravely against the unjust and racial ones.

After the latest experience, men of position should make it a point to travel on deck as far as possible. That alone will afford them an opportunity to get acquainted with the real situation. This way they will help the people in difficulties. I realized the part that I must play. This train of thought must have gone on in my head for a few minutes.

I then resumed my seat partly in a dreaming state. Mr. Kallenbach walked forward and backward restlessly. He very much appeared like a lion in cage. Some Indians had been on the shore to receive us. Mr. Kallenbach informed them about me. They told me that they had already made arrangements on the previous day for my landing. They would send somebody again to the immigration office though the man who was to bring the permit was expected any moment. Mr. Kallenbach brought this message to me. He had no more patience to wait, and therefore, went to see the officer again. His reply was that he was not able to do anything. After disposing of the remaining cases, the officer went away and left word to the effect that my case would take still some time. Some time after the officer had left, the efforts of the Indians of Delagoa Bay bore fruit. Their messenger brought my permit and it was shown to the officer's clerk. He then issued me a permit to land on shore. Mr. Kallenbach and I landed and after a reception from the Indian Community, we proceeded to Johannesburg the same evening.

I had a good lesson from the above incident. I present it to the readers of the *Indian Opinion* so that they will have some idea of the state of things, and they might profit by it. I would not like to tax them further, for such experiences are in no way uncommon to them. I know Indians at Delagoa Bay as well as other ports, who have had to pass through the same bitter experiences or even more. This knowledge of hardships made me all the more miserable and, therefore, induced me to narrate my experience.



I may be considered 'educated'. I can make my way out of the woods. I may be known to many Europeans, and reckoned as a 'big man'. Many will come out to assist me. Even then, I had to pass through this ordeal of racialism. I asked myself, "What would be the condition of those who are ignorant, illiterate and helpless?"

On deck, an Indian fellow-passenger unfolded his mind to say that we were like little ants and suffering was the only condition to make our way out of the difficulties. I call this ignorance. We know not how to preserve our self-respect. Our chief concern is to amass wealth. In pursuit of it, we do not bother if the whites call us coolies, captains or others on steamers kick us, municipalities drive us to locations and keep us without land or treat us like dogs. This is the average state of our minds. Hence it is that the whites look down upon us. But let us not forget that we are the architects of our own destiny. This is the lesson we have to draw from the above incident; and having learnt it, we must introduce necessary changes in our life. The change should be twofold. First, we should ameliorate our own condition and secondly, as one man, demand justice from the whites.

## APPENDIX C

### THE FIRST ARTICLE

[The article as it appeared in the first issue of the *Indian Opinion* published from the Phoenix Settlement gives an outline of Gandhiji's scheme for 'the settlers'. It embodies in essence the teachings of Ruskin and Tolstoy, as well as the great cultural heritage of India.]

The *Indian Opinion* enters upon the third stage of its career in the short space of the eighteen months of its existence. The proprietor, guided by patriotic motives, embarked upon the enterprise on the slenderest resources. He had to depend for the editing of the paper on purely voluntary and unpaid assistance. This he readily received. It was his intention to make the paper self-supporting by devoting the profits from the general printing to meet the unexpected deficiency on the paper. But such was not to be the case. Although this journal supplied the real want, what may be termed a commercial demand had to be created. In other words the paper had not only to find its matter, but its readers also. Moreover the sending of over 500 complimentary copies was a great drag. Pecuniary assistance had therefore to be called in. The Natal Indian Congress and the British Indian Association (of the Transvaal) came to the rescue, and voted certain funds towards the payment of the expense of printing and posting the complimentary copies.

Still the paper continued, octopus-like, to devour all it received and wanted more. The situation could only be saved by heroic measures. Patch work was useless. Palliatives were dangerous. There remained then an appeal to the devoted workers and friends in favour of adopting a novel and revolutionary project. They were to look not to the present but to the future, not to their pockets but to the paper itself. And why not? The object of the *Indian Opinion* was to bring the European and the Indian subjects of King Edward closer together. It was to educate public opinion to remove causes for misunderstanding, to put



before the Indians their own blemishes and to show them the path of duty while they insisted on securing their rights. This was an imperial and pure ideal, towards the fruition of which, anyone could work unselfishly. So it appealed to some of the workers who accepted and joined the new scheme.

The plan was shortly this : If a piece of ground sufficiently large and far away from the hustle of the town could be secured for housing the plant and machinery, each one of the workers could have his plot of land on which he could live. This would simplify the question of living under sanitary and healthy conditions, without heavy expenses.

The workers could receive per month an advance sufficient to cover necessary expenses, and the whole profits could be divided amongst them at the end of each year. The management would thus be saved the necessity of having to find money from week to week. The workers also could have the option of buying out their plot of land at the actual cost price. (This idea of selling plots had to be cancelled afterwards). Living under such conditions and amid the beautiful surroundings which have given Natal the name of the garden colony, the workers could live a more simple and natural life, and the ideas of Ruskin and Tolstoy combined with strict business principles, or, on the other hand, the workers could reproduce the artificiality of the town life, if it pleased them to do so. One could hope that the spirit of the scheme and surroundings would have an educative influence on them. There would be a closer brotherly combination between the European and the Indian workers. There was a possibility that the daily working hours could be reduced. Each could become his own agriculturist. The English workers could belie the taunt that the Englishman in South Africa would not cultivate the soil and work with his own hands. He has here all the facilities for such work without any of the drawbacks. The Indian worker could copy his European brother and learn the dignity and utility of healthy recreation as distinguished from constant slaving toil for miserable gains.

The incentive would be threefold to all. An ideal to work for in the shape of the *Indian Opinion*, perfectly healthy surroundings to live in ; and an immediate prospect of owning a piece of land on the most advantageous terms, and a direct tangible interest and participation in the scheme.

Such in outline was the argument. It has been translated into action. The printing works have been removed to a large piece of ground (100 acres) near Phoenix station on the north coast line (12 miles from Durban). There are already Englishmen and Indians working here under the scheme. It is yet too early to forecast the result. It is a bold experiment and fraught with momentous consequences. We know of no non-religious organization that is or has been managed on the principles above laid down. If it succeeds, we cannot but think that it would be worthy of imitation. We write impersonally and no one on the staff of this journal claims any glory over the matter. We therefore think it but right to take the public into our confidence. Their support would encourage us very greatly and no doubt contribute largely to the success of the scheme. We can appeal to both the great communities residing in South Africa and trust that they will assist the management to bring the scheme to the successful issue that we believe it deserves.



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